

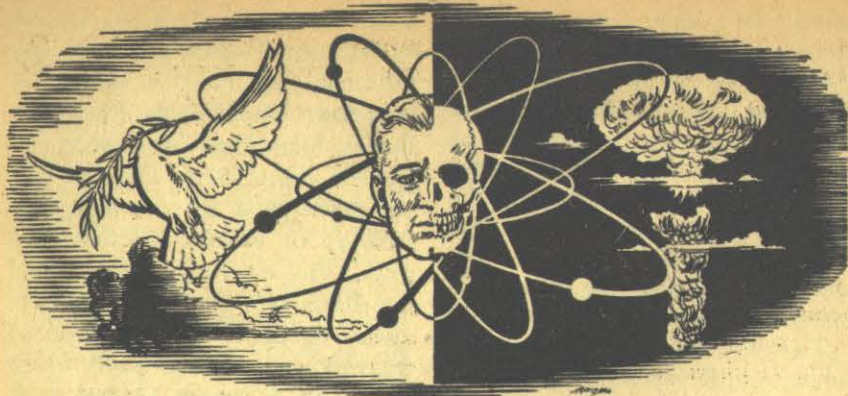
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THE END IS NOT YET

BY L. RON HUBBARD

Second of three parts. The essential trouble with belligerent people is that they're sure they're right, their ends are good, and they'll do anything to prove it. Murder and mayhem and war, for instance—

Illustrated by Rogers

Synopsis

CHARLES MARTEL, nuclear physicist has left the employ of the Allied War Crimes Commission in Europe because

CONNOVER BANKS causes the useless execution of a famous psychiatrist who is part of a scientific group seeking to prevent an atomic war. Banks is a partner and employee of

JULES FABRECKEN, fascist industrialist whose international em-

pire of business neatly survived another employee—**Adolf Hitler**. Fabrecken desires to monopolize all world industry and so rule. To do this he must promote an atom war between America and Russia and prevent further scientific discovery. Preventing him is **PROFESSOR HAUS**, ex-Nazi, who is intelligence chief for high-ranking scientists who have their headquarters in the High Atlas of Africa. Haus contacts Martel who has married

ANNE VON STEEL, daughter of the executed psychiatrist and who keeps house for Martel and their adopted boy, **BUCKINGHAM**, a British waif abandoned early in the war on the continent and who has learned much of starvation and cunning.

In Biarritz Haus makes an appointment with Martel to show him the scientific personnel files.

Buckingham follows Haus when he leaves Martel's house.

PART 2

At eight thirty that night, Mr. Connover Banks and certain servile gentlemen, all businesslike and carefully instructed, walked quietly into the Street of the Scalded Cat and approached the rickety old tenement which Martel had been given as Haus' address.

There was a quiet, cool breeze flowing down the curving lane, most welcome after the day's warmth, and a pleasant three-quarter moon was rising above the rugged hills. A few loiterers stood about on the walks or leaned against crazy walls or rickety lamp-posts. A few lights glowed warmly from the flat-fronted buildings.

Mr. Connover Banks hung back with prudence indicative of both great intelligence and, at the same time, an awareness of importance in that he could not permit himself to be unduly careless and risk robbing the world of his inestimable services.

There was a sort of court, opening through an arch on the street, which separated two buildings and

inspired each with a tangle of fragrant greenery at once affording the occupants with scenery and a convenient place to dump undesirable fluids and garbage. The northernmost house had a small balcony from which a stairway led down into the court, and after some consultation aided by roughly collaring an urchin and almost rubbing his nose off with badges, Professor Haus was discovered to live in the room just off this balcony and to the right as one went up.

Very discreet indeed now, Mr. Connover Banks saw the splendid Gritter—who had just set the urchin aside with a pleasant promise that his head would be twisted off if he so much as made a whimper or moved—post two men, one on either side of the arch, station a third at the bottom of the staircase and then heavily grind up the steps himself with two more at his heels.

A moment after Gritter disappeared off the balcony there was a shriek inside the building which struck the street active and then deserted and numb, after which Gritter reappeared on the balcony and motioned an all well.

At this the two men outside the arch withdrew inside where shadow would mask them, the stairway sentry went out of sight under them and Mr. Connover Banks, followed by a peculiarly weaselish little animal, went smilingly under the arch, up the stairs and, with Caesarian confidence, entered the area of his conquest.

He found Professor Haus senseless in the middle of a shabby room

and despite the quantity of gore which was smearing itself on the rug from the quarry's mouth, saw that the fellow was still breathing.

"Good work, my excellent friend," said Banks to Gritter.

"I just try to do my job," rasped the modest fellow. He kicked a Luger out from under the table and, without too much ostentation, pocketed it.

Mr. Connover Banks drew an apple out of his pocket and bit at it. He looked around the room and was not much impressed with what he saw.

There was a small, white painted iron bed, a chair with the cane missing from the seat, a dry goods box which served as a dresser, a chest which contained a few clothes and a table which sat wearily on the unpainted floor burdened by a great mass of old books.

Banks examined the books and found them to be in German or Russian and as both these languages were considerably out of his line—he found it easier to hire linguists—dismissed them. He turned to the weaselish person and nodded an understood command.

With the enthusiasm of a terrier hot after a rat, the person went at it. He tore up the mattress and he ripped the clothes in the chest, he burrowed into the dry goods box and he thrust a knife everywhere through it for secret panels, he got a board or two off the floor and some plaster off the wall and ceiling. And, in short, searched the place with so much confusion and with so many dartings and stabblings that one

would have thought him berserk if one did not realize that he worked under the direct gaze of Mr. Connover Banks. Disheveled then and panting until his watery eyes started, the person stood helplessly before his master.

"Nothing here," he reported.

Banks smiled pleasantly at him. "I'm somewhat disappointed in you, Feak. You had better look again."

Feak darted back to work and he tore up more boards and ripped up more plaster until the air under the bare electric light was smoking with dust. All the while he worked Feak sniffed and sniveled as though greatly aided by his nose, which, by any standard of area or angular measure was a very large nose indeed.

He came back to Banks. He shook his head in a vigorous negative. Banks pointed to Haus on the floor. He did not like this senseless brutality but it was urgent that he obtain the information which only Haus knew. Further, it was necessary to play up to these men who served him, for he could not permit himself to be weak in their eyes. He began to doubt that he would get anything out of Haus. But perhaps if he applied methods which the old Nazi best understood they would yet achieve their end. He turned his back on the scene for he did not enjoy it. The thud of Gritter's knuckles seemed to be jarring him instead.

At last Feak reported. "Nothing! He will say nothing," said Feak. As though all the time he had been oppressed with the feeling that Haus

might make a quick confession of it and was just now beginning to be hopeful that Haus would not. He went back at it and there was more noise.

Mr. Banks looked at his watch. It was a fifteen hundred dollar watch and it told the time and the day and month and year, and it gave the phases of the Moon and even changed for the millennium. He admired the watch for a little while and then saw that it was nearly nine.

Mr. Banks turned and stuck a two-dollar cigar in his mouth. He put his hands behind his back and rocked from heel to toe. He peered through the folds of fat at the bloody mess which was tied to the chair.

Gritter was unruffled but Feak was dancing about like a flyweight daring his opponent to strike. He was perfectly safe in this for Haus was unconscious and tied besides. Feak was moist with sweat and shivering excitedly. His collar was unfastened and his cuffs were turned up.

"Ha, ha, my dear Feak," said Mr. Banks. "What a card you are, surely. But no more of this just now. We must be very quiet for a while. I think probably our dear friend here will soon have visitors. It was to be nine, wasn't it, Gritter?"

"Nine o'clock," said Gritter, polishing his hands together to get the numbness out of his knuckles. "I set up the amplifier and I listened and that's what I heard them say."

"And what else did you hear?" said Banks.

"Why, nothing."

"Nothing?"

"They came to the door and that's all the work we could make the amplifier do."

"Now, now, my dear old friend, please think about it. You heard them say nothing but that?" And Banks gave his employee a ponderous and witty wink.

"Wake up," said Feak to Gritter. "He isn't asking you to think. I'll tell you what to say if the time ever comes." And he looked imperiously up at the huge Gritter.

"Oh, that," said Gritter. "Of course. You're the boss, Mr. Banks. I just do my job."

"I'm sure you do, Gritter. I'm sure you do. Ha, ha. And a very good job you do. Well now, is our friend here going to be out all night?"

Feak danced over to the cracked water pitcher and moistened a dirty towel. He darted at Haus and began to scrub away at his face, pummeling him on the back of the neck the while.

Either the pain or the coolness of the water or both brought poor Haus around again. He dazedly sought to peer through the wrecks of his eyes and to right the rocking room.

He saw Banks. "Who are you?"

"Never mind who he is!" screamed Feak, dancing back and forth in front of Haus and waving the bloody towel. "Just tell us where all your papers are or you'll get it. If you don't tell us where they are now, we'll work on you again later."

And when you don't tell us then, why there's a place near here that is just right for your kind. All the modern improvements. All the best and most beautiful improvements. Just tell us where you hide your papers and who your friends are and you'll quietly hang. But if you don't—"

Banks laughed. "Feak, my friend, to listen to you one would think you the most bloody-minded creature on earth!"

"I'll make him talk," said Feak. "I've a world of experience with these fellows. So long as Gritter's knuckles hold out, you'll talk, criminal. You'll talk! Now where do you keep your papers?"

"Enough now," said Banks. "I think we had better be quiet. We might scare the birds away, you know."

"The birds," said Gritter. "That's very good, Mr. Banks."

"I won't do any talking," said Haus. "I am tired of running away. You will kill me. I am old, I cannot stand much pain. Soon I will die—"

"Sooner than you bargain for, let me tell you!" said Feak, thrusting his extraordinary nose quite close to Haus.

"The sooner the better," said Haus. "I am tired of running away."

"Come, come now," said Mr. Banks. "We don't mean to be heartless or brutal. We are, after all, civilized human beings and, as my good friend Gritter would tell you, we only do our jobs. See now, Feak, he's just an old man and with

a little kindness on our parts, I am sure he will be reasonable. Here, take off his bonds and give him a drink of this." He pulled a sixty-two-dollar flask from his pocket which was full of thousand franc Napoleon brandy and gave it to Feak. "Untie him. We aren't Nazis, you know."

The battered old man said nothing. He would have smiled a little if there had been anything left of his mouth. There seemed to be a strange strength in him, a thin but strong light which blazed in inverse ratio to the state of his physical being. He was on his way out. He knew it and, knowing it, was not afraid. He was the greatest intelligence officer the world had ever known.

"Thank you, Mr. Banks," said Haus. He chafed some circulation into his hands and then took the flask. He tasted the brandy and found that it was very fine.

This was not so bad. A clear, cool night. His work done. A drink of Napoleon brandy. This was not so bad.

"To victory, Mr. Banks," said Professor Haus.

"Ha, ha. To victory of course," said Banks.

The old man tilted up the flask. He poured half a pint of it down his throat without swallowing and then lowered the bottle. "So you are concerned for my papers," he said.

"Not concerned. Interested," said Banks.

"The only papers I have are those

which prove me innocent of any crime under the Nazis," said Haus.

Banks almost came out from behind his smile. Then he relaxed and laughed. "Oh come now, my dear Haus. Come now. We are not such fools. We have caught three scientists and they all confess to have sent you information. Just tell us for whom you are working and why and maybe we will forget all about the old charges."

"You'd not forget," said Haus. "No. I was a political scientist. A genius. I was the world's greatest intelligence officer. You would not forget these things. You would have me shot—"

"That's less painful than what I intend!" cried Feak.

"Hush, Feak," said Mr. Banks. "The professor is just what he says. A very great man, Feak. A man worthy of greater things. A man who very well might live to do wonders for the world."

"No, Mr. Banks," said Haus. He smiled with his eyes and upended the flask. He emptied the last half pint and lowered it again. He swallowed and felt the warmth of it crowd out the agony of his body. "No, Mr. Banks. For if I had to choose between living in service to such as you and dying in the full belief that your kind is the murderer of humanity—"

"Have a care!" screamed Feak.

But Banks was quicker. He struck backhanded and threw Haus off the chair with the violence of the blow. The empty flask thudded to the bare floor. Haus staggered up.

"I did not say I would not tell you," said Haus, unafraid.

Banks instantly regained his composure and glanced at Gritter and Feak to see if they had noticed his outburst. If they had, they did not betray it. Banks managed a smile and picked up the empty flask.

"Well, well. Quite a drinker, Haus. Quite a drinker. Would you like some more? Gritter, run down to our car and bring up a little more brandy for our friend."

Gritter went out and scouted the way before he went down the steps. He glanced at the hidden sentries, checking them, for Gritter was a very thorough man. When he came to the street he looked carefully up and down it, assumed that it was deserted and went at a bear trot down the hill toward the car.

"That's one of them," said Buckingham.

Martel drew the boy a little farther into the shadow of a doorway opposite the arch. The building was so rickety that it had been abandoned to wreckers and, led by Buckingham, they had come through the rear of it and into the doorway without exposing themselves in the street.

"He's the big stiff that went up and knocked Haus out," said Buckingham. "That was Banks you saw at the window."

Suspicion cut through Martel's thoughts. "Banks? You mean you know Banks by sight? How is this?"

Buckingham squirmed. He had so far inferred that he had been wit-

ness of all this from his present post for fear of worrying Charles.

"I . . . well. I was up on the roof and saw through a vent. That was while you were waiting in back for me to show up. After I left you . . . well, that's how it is."

"Foolish lad," said Martel: "Those people have an unlimited hunting license. They would kill anyone they thought would expose their methods, and excuse it with treason charges. Don't do that again please."

"All right, Charles. Look, here comes Gritter. See. He's stopped to talk to somebody else."

A new member of the squad had indeed come up and had earnest information to deliver. Gritter shook his head in a perplexed way and then at a rolling trot went in through the arch and up the steps and so out of sight.

"That's the man who was watching our house when I went back," said Buckingham. "He must have told Gritter that we left but he don't know how."

"Doesn't," said Martel.

"Doesn't," repeated Buckingham mechanically. "Look. That's right. They aren't going to wait for you. They're coming out."

Martel pulled Buckingham back again and together they watched Haus being dragged down the steps and into the court. Feak prodded the old man forward while Gritter stayed back with Mr. Banks.

When they had Haus on the sidewalk, the guards were pulled out of hiding and one of them went for the car.

While they waited, Feak jumped

nervously about, coming in close to Haus and loudly whispering promises of what would happen to him when they reached prison.

"I said I would tell you who had my papers," said Haus a little loudly, carefully darting near-sighted glances into the street.

"Who has them then?" cried Feak.

"Brooks of Sheffield," said Haus.

"Who?" cried Feak.

"Yes," said Banks. "Who might that be?"

"A literary gentleman named Copperfield," said Haus, "who can be located in England—"

"Ah. Sheffield, England," said Banks. "You drive, Gritter."

"Brooks of Sheffield has them!" cried Haus.

"But this literary gentleman?" said Banks.

"Copperfield Fish Wharf, Sheffield, England." He gestured with his chin at Feak. "Untie my hands and let me smoke. I can tell you more. Much more."

They untied his hands and he reached into the breast pocket of his shirt and took out a cheap package of French cigarettes. He started to light one but instead threw the whole blazing pack of matches into the face of Banks. He knocked Feak sideways with a rush and raced out into the street. As he sprinted he threw the package of cigarettes from him toward where Martel hid. It seemed more than probable that Haus would get away.

But there was sitting behind the wheel of the low gray car the man called Gritter. And at the first leap

of their prey, Gritter snapped into low gear. The car sprang from the pavement and ahead under a deep spur with the throttle.

Before Martel could move or yell, the car struck Haus. The old man went spinning ahead and then the car overtook him again and passed the right front and right rear wheels over him.

Haus struggled to get up from the cobblestones but there seemed to be something wrong with his back and he could not co-ordinate his limbs. He swore in Polish and his voice had the grate of agony in it.

But Gritter had the car stopped in an instant and shifted into reverse. He surged backwards, steering with a swoop to the right. The vehicle struck the old man again and passed the left wheels over him.

Gritter leaped out, gun in hand and flopped Haus over with a yank.

The old man's arms flopped loosely out. His head rolled nervelessly to one side. Gritter stood up and pushed at him with his foot. Banks came up. His stomach was turned by the brutality and he cursed the day when necessity forced him to employ such animals as Gritter and Feak.

Gritter said, "He's dead," and holstered his gun. Banks mastered his rising anger.

"Walk down to the gendarme post," he said to Feak. "Identify yourself and have them send somebody up here for this body."

Feak was off promptly. Banks stood a little while, trying to conquer his nausea and his rage at Gritter for the senseless act.

Gritter said, "You think that was straight dope, chief?"

"Don't try to think," said Banks and the bridle came from his anger.

"What . . . what's the matter?"

The deep folded eyes seared him with contempt. "I ought to fire you. What kind of stupid animal are you?"

Gritter gaped at him. "I didn't know you'd object to me hitting him with the car."

Banks shut his jaw on the torrent of abuse which sought exit. Instead, he said, "You've wiped out a trail and probably lost us papers that Jules Fabrecken—"

Gritter started in terror and looked around. "Shut up!"

Banks was instantly in full possession of himself and also looking about him. He did not pursue the conversation but created an immediate diversion by ordering everyone into the car.

Gritter guided it around the object in the gutter and the gray car sped out of sight leaving the street deserted, or nearly so.

A moment later Martel lifted his cheek from the old professor's heart. "He's still alive," he whispered in awe.

With a swift gesture he motioned to Buckingham to take Haus' feet while he himself supported the shoulders. They quickly brought Haus into the doorway they had just quitted and gently laid him in the wrecked hall.

"Get those cigarettes," said Martel.

Buckingham flicked out like a

shadow and was back in an instant, but he found Martel's powerful shoulders had already wrenched a lattice work from the arch above the door. As they laid Haus upon it, footsteps could be heard. People were already letting curiosity override their fear of authority. And from down the street a voice came, "Up in this block, gendarme."

They bore Haus through the ruined house and into the street beyond. The taxi there purred into life, snorting out charcoal fumes. Whatever the driver had arranged with himself to say at the long wait he had had, the sight of the burdened fares drove it from him.

Gently they laid little Haus on the rear seat and the taxi moved away, Martel and Buckingham kneeling before the seat to save the old man any unnecessary jars.

"Drive slowly!" said Martel.

"Yes, captain. To the hospital?"

Until that moment Martel had not fully realized the problem. He had acted on blind anger and impulse, for the sight of those boors and dolts so little respecting the great Haus, at the thought of the destruction of such a brain by the animal Gritter, a year and a half of seclusion had gone spinning away and the full hoarse yell of war thundered in his ears. To take Haus to a hospital was to condemn him to death. Not to take him certainly would.

Martel realized that disuse had cost him some of the command of himself which he had always exercised. He was trembling with anger still but his will power inexorably forced his thoughts into

order. As though he reached into a dusty tunnel, he pulled from his memory dossiers.

A fantastic memory it was, Martel's. Built on a solid core of great capacity, constructed with the logic of which only a first rank scientist is capable, crammed with logarithms, calibers, formulas, faces, deeds, crimes, heroic acts, names and histories until it seemed impossible for it to hold more, it still could grasp a page at a glance and give it up five years hence verbatim. This, coupled with an imagination and intuition almost mystic and certainly seldom found, had made Martel of championship rank in any field he entered. And it brought forth now:

"Albert Franz bone specialist and physician, born 1891 of Russian father and Jewish mother, christened Velkin, practiced Vienna, et cetera, et cetera. Oposed Members of French underground in favor of Nazis on August 3, 1943 at Paris and gave six underground names, et cetera, et cetera. Residing at Villa Trieste alone—"

Martel turned to the driver. "Go two more blocks and then turn right for five blocks. Stop on the corner."

The driver did exactly as ordered. There was something about Martel's voice which made a puppet out of him.

At the corner they resumed the lattice and Martel threw a hundred franc note at the driver. "Keep the change. If you go to the police—"

"No, no, no!" said the driver.

"I am very happy that we agree,"



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said Martel dryly. "Now drive away and don't look back."

Hastily the cab went away.

Dr. Albert Franz was not delighted to have visitors. War might have left him rich and passed him by forgotten—for he had covered his footsteps well—but the fear in his heart which constant vigilance fed rather than assuaged would be with him always.

He sat now at the head of a long but lonely board, served by a butler as anxious to remain anonymous as himself. And though the golden candelabra danced and the plate sparkled and the scent of recent viands still lingered spicily in the air, and though the doctor shined in flawless dinner dress, he still could start at the sound of an opened door.

"Who's there?" he demanded.

The instant appearance of a man in mufti brought Dr. Franz up from the chair.

"You may go," said the apparition to the butler.

The butler hesitated for a moment, looking searchingly at the visitor and promptly went, not even hearing the counter-command of his master.

Martel looked about the beautiful, softly lit room, at the Rubens on the wall, at the diamond stud in the doctor's shirt front. His voice was pleasant now, very companionable, and its tone seemed calculated to put the doctor at rest.

But the contents of the speech did not.

"Well, well, Dr. Velkin. I am happy to see—"

"Oh, my God!" gasped the doctor and hurriedly held a snowy linen napkin to his mouth.

"Forgive me, forgive me," said Martel. "In Paris—"

The doctor swept his chair back and stood, gripping the table, shaking, his eyes glassy above the napkin.

"I am dead," he whispered. "You will kill me."

"No, no, doctor. Not so."

"Who . . . who are you? I have money—"

"Come, doctor, we waste an inordinate amount of time. I have someone here in the hall and I think we had better take him instantly to your operating room. You have one, of course?"

"The door was locked. No one knows—"

"Lead the way to your operating room!" said Martel.

The doctor managed to stand straight. He seemed unable to command his legs. But somehow he managed to obey.

As he passed the foyer, Martel took up his share of the burden, and they followed down the corridor, across an inner court and into a detached section of the villa. Lights came on with a blinding glare and sprang back from the enamel table and basins and glittered upon steam sterilizers, respirators and cabinet knobs.

Buckingham and Martel gently laid their burden upon the operating table. Not until now had the doctor noticed and the sight made him stand straight and back off.

"He's dead."

"No he's not," said Martel. "Quickly. You have plasma—"

A cunning came into the doctor's face. "How would I get plasma?"

"If we must go into your personal history, the German black market and now the French—"

"You know that, too!" He held up his hand. "I'll get it. But this man has compound fractures, shock—"

"Your hands, regardless of your past, are expert. This man must live. If he does not live, then six members of the underground—"

"Who are you? Who are you?"

"I take it he will live."

The interest of the doctor was pathetic. "But his heart action is almost gone . . . I'll do all I can! I promise. I promise on my word! But miracles—"

"You are going to make a miracle here. And remember this, that this man must not be reported to the police or seen by anyone. His presence in your house is dangerous only to a lesser extent than an item or two of your past. Let him be discovered or let him die—"

"Don't threaten. Oh please. Please. I'll do what you say. But he is old, he won't heal—"

"Use anti-reticular serum. Use estrone and testosterone. Thyroxin. Amino acids. Use penicillin. Make him live."

"But these things are impossible to get. And if they can be gotten, they cost—"

"If they can't be gotten—"

"I have them."

"And right now some adrenalin and blood plasma."

"Are you a doctor? What do you mean by estrone and testosterone? The combination— It— What theory is this?"

"His theory," said Buckingham. "Are you going to argue until this man is dead?"

"Inject them intramuscularly. The body will maintain a proper balance. Testosterone won't work all alone. It hardly works at all. And thyroxin is needed. Use ten testosterone to one estrone and three grains thyroxin per day. You will hear from me perhaps tomorrow, perhaps next year. You will keep this man here, alive and convalescing, wanting for nothing until you hear from me."

"But your name!"

"Get busy," said Martel.

Dr. Franz asked no more. He went to work.

As the plasma dripped into the veins of Professor Haus, Martel wanted to know one more thing. "Do you have a set of Dickens here?"

The doctor was distracted by the question. He despaired of saving the patient and the consequences made sweat stand stiff and cold on his forehead.

"Yes. I think there is. In the library— Why, this man's back seems to be broken!"

"Mend it," said Martel. "Come."

Buckingham followed him out. So well had Martel comported himself that Buckingham was amazed to see that, once they were alone, rage still tightened Martel's jaw.

man. He wrote for them. He wrote pieces about Boche tenderness and high culture which made even the censors drool. The trouble was, these pieces were so very fine, so extremely well turned, so perfectly expressed that the French people and other Boche digested lands laughed until their sides stitched and begged for more and more. The Boche did not understand this for a while, for such was the Hun thoroughness that they wanted to research the entire matter. They did. He not only went begging for more champagne but also ran with dachshunds snapping at his heels and his ex-companions crying after him to come back and inhabit a nice comfortable concentration camp.

He had called himself Thoreau under the Boche. Exactly who dubbed him "le Chat a Faime" remains unknown, but he seems to have liked the name well enough for he used it as a title, which brazenness was rewarded eventually by his present post. The government, knowing well the violence of his pen, was only too happy to get him away down in Southern France, and he had gone most willingly saying that detective stories had long been so decayed—being, after all, only the much hack-gnawed bones of Hugo and Poe—that genius should at last research the field.

In Biarritz he had done no writing. There were too many fascinating women and too much champagne there by far, and the police pay well smothered his urge to be creative in the literary sense.

Dark, dashing, brilliant and bom-

bastic, Comte Faime cared about as much for the laws of France as he did for German philosophers, and became in a breath the sensation of the city, arresting and refusing to arrest at whim. It was a principle of his that "the introduction of an arbitrary factor in any attempt to regulate human behavior is only an invitation for innocent people to impale themselves on justice while running away from their all too clearly seen personal woes." He meant that he didn't think a state should monkey with individual reform, but should act as a sympathetic big brother and generally set an example of decency. Only in France, the most civilized country in the world, could a public official hold such a view in public. And if this had been his only sin, he could have had the post forever. But he had an additional failing: he did not think national boundaries should exist, a fact which made him dangerous indeed even in France.

Accordingly when Comte Faime, dining very late amidst much laughter and elegance—and appreciating everything only as youth can appreciate—received intelligence that an old man had been run over in the Street of the Scalded Cat, he gave the matter thought. It might be that there was a sympathy for the street born from his old underground name, but it was more likely that he didn't appreciate drivers who ran over old men.

He called for the driver and the flustered gendarme sergeant—who had made the report incidentally in going off duty—had to admit that

they had made no arrest and probably would not make any.

Comte Faime threw down a breast of chicken and leaped up with the gesture of one about to draw a rapier and fight the world. "Not arrested? Not even examined! *Ma foi! Po cap de Dieu!* By the saints in Heaven and Hell underneath! Are you trying to tell me how the city should be run, *hein?*"

The old sergeant—who didn't approve of making writers into policemen even if it meant they should turn to honest work—still backed off with his mustaches whipped by the wind of Comte Faime's hands.

"But it is all regular!" he protested. "The Allied War Crimes Commission had the accident. The secretary to M. Connover Banks himself has reported it and we have sent for the body and found there is no body."

Comte Faime was silent for an instant, a fact which was very unusual. His flashing black eyes roamed the ceiling and then, "They did it?"

"Why yes. They did it, Monsieur le Prefect."

"Ah."

"You see?" said the sergeant, "It makes a difference!"

"Ah," said the ominous count.

"And there was no body at all," cried the sergeant, feeling very much his upper hand now.

"Ah," said the count. "No body."

"No body, no crime!" triumphed the old sergeant.

"No brains, no stripes!" shouted Faime and thereupon snatched up

a table knife and in a trice, sure enough, there were no stripes.

Throwing down napkin and bowing to the guests he had until this moment forgotten, he called for his hat and he called for his stick and he called for his gendarmes and that was the last that house or Biarritz ever saw of him.

For the count had been a dizzying sensation for some time and he was bored with it. One can't live on the high wine of danger for years and merely set it back on the buffet to be untouched for evermore. Not when one is a writer and only twenty-eight.

The events were as rapid as his decision.

He went out to the car and was about to start for the Street of the Scalded Cat when a messenger came panting to the running board and saluted.

"M'sieu' le Prefect! There has been a murder!"

"Ah."

"A woman, M'sieu' le Prefect. Shot to death in a cottage near the Villa Verite."

"Get in! Direct us!" said the count.

"But the old man?" said the driver.

"First we go to where a body is," said the count. "The night is young. Delereaux, go to headquarters and say where I shall be. Proceed!"

The driver drove madly, an old raid siren on the running board screaming its loudest, and the town and beach fled by. With a loud yell

of brakes and protesting tires the car skidded to a halt before a small cottage and the gendarmes leaped out.

The count surveyed the scene. All the lights were on full in the house. Neighbors stood on the walk in delicious horror. There was a low gray car at the curb and two men in civilian dress lounging against it, smoking, bored. On the lawn lay a lump of something covered up with a blanket.

Expertly—for a very small amount of imagination and a large quantity of observation can make a good police officer in a year—Faime evaluated the scene and then motioned his *caporal* to pick up a corner of the blanket.

The man under it had been shot four times, all very expertly about the nose and eyes so there was not much left of his looks. His identification cards said that he was an employee of the Allied War Crimes Commission and his passport said that he was Jean Belleau of Switzerland.

The *caporal* dropped the blanket on a motion of the count's hand and they went up on the porch. Here they almost fell over another body, covered with the awning from the yard swing. The *caporal* lifted the cover and the count looked closely.

The second man had been shot three times in the face, all very neatly, and the entire back of his head was gone. He, too, was armed with Allied War Crimes Commission credentials and his passport called him Alaric and read "Germany." The count threw the papers

down on the body in disgust and stalked into the house.

There he found everything tomb-like. The place had people in it but no one was moving or talking. A very plump and expensive looking man was leaning against a buffet smoking an extremely-fat cigar. A small, mean, clerkish sort of fellow and a big gorilla were standing watchfully on either side of a wounded person who sat, a white and savage prisoner, in a chair. There was a boy kneeling beside a chaise longue and crying dry, searing tears in heartbroken silence.

On the chaise longue lay a startlingly beautiful woman, eyes decently closed in death, a bullet wound in her breast which bled no more, her hands folded quietly as though to hide the blackening stains. She was dead and the boy cried silently.

"I am the prefect of police," said the count, not looking at the prisoner or the beautiful lady or the fat man but at a pistol which lay conspicuously in the center of the floor, almost as if it had been placed there carefully.

"Well, well, well," said the fat man. "I'm sure glad you've come, mungsoor. We've had quite a time of it here. Yes, quite a time." He came over and shook the count's un-offered hand.

"We'd have had a better one!" raged the prisoner, "if you hadn't shot me in the back!" He appeared near fainting from loss of blood, madness and grief, but there was a ring in his voice which made his

jailers cringe back from him for an instant and then grab him officiously.

"Yes, yes, quite a time," said the fat man. "My name is Banks, mungsoor. Connover Banks of the Allied War Crimes Commission. I'm a sort of political advisor to them. Small fry, ha, ha. Looks like we did some of your work for you tonight. Fortunate we came along. That fellow in the chair is a notorious criminal named Charles Martel. He's been working to free enemy prisoners for whatever they'll pay him. Oh, don't protest! We have the evidence on him all right."

Banks received no answer from the count and so bellowed along, "We came over to arrest him and found him here with his wife. She was Anne von Steel, daughter of a pro-Nazi. She corrupted him into helping the enemy but tonight when we started to question him it was she who got panicky and she started to spill the beans. Women, you know."

Still no answer, so Banks plowed on. "Charles Martel there was sitting at the desk. See, the drawer is open. He grabbed up a forty-five and shot her before she could talk and then when my men charged him, he shot both of them. Fortunately my good Gritter here managed to shoot Martel in the scuffle and as he ran out of bullets, it was all over. So, you see, we've had our hands full. But now that you're here, we can turn it over to you. And I'm sure I couldn't ask for more capable hands. Cigar, mungsoor?"

The count looked at the prisoner. "You appear to want to talk. Could

you be so kind as to give me your version of the affair?"

"Why, there's no need—" but Banks was motioned to silence.

"Tell him, Charles! Tell him!" cried the boy.

Martel put his voice under control and tried to still the rage quivers in his hands.

"Monsieur le Prefect," said Martel, "that man who stands before you is Connover Banks. He has tonight committed two murders, murders without sanction of law of any kind. He is not what he pretends, but a—"

"I am sure you don't want to hear—" began Banks.

"But I do," said the count. "Please say exactly what happened."

It was training that spoke, training and self-control. But the eyes were stunned, half mad with anger and grief. "I came home with my boy about half an hour ago. My boy said he saw someone in the living room just before we reached the house and then I saw someone there too. It was a man with a drawn gun in his hand. My wife—there was a fierce effort here—"was sitting in the chaise longue. The man supposed himself hidden behind a door.

"I came to the bottom of the steps quietly. Having no gun, I intended to enter and crush the man between the door and the wall. As I started to come up the steps one man here on the porch—he is still there—leaped up and shoved a gun at me. He made a noise, tripping on a chair.

"My wife . . . thought it was I. They must have told her they would kill me unless she told them some-

thing. She cried out to me to run, that it was a trap.

"Those were the last words my wife ever spoke, monsieur."

Martel paused and ran a hand across his face. His eyes were agony as he sought to keep from looking at his wife.

He went on. "I saw her fall. The door was open. The man on the porch grabbed me. I took his gun and killed him. Another man came out from the shrubbery just as I fired at the first. He shot me in the back. The shot knocked me down. I turned over and killed him.

"As my gun was empty I threw it at the man I had just killed and grabbed his automatic. It was a Spanish automatic. I tried to shoot Gritter as he came out of the house but it jammed. We fought a little while on the lawn and then Gritter and Feak came out and took me inside. When I regained consciousness these three men were in the room deciding what story they should tell. They called in two more and coached them on the story.

"If you want to take me and execute me for murder, monsieur, I am willing to go. I have no further reason for living."

"No, no, Charles!" cried the boy. "Monsieur, this is Charles Martel, do you hear me? This is the great Charles Martel. These men are liars and murderers! They murdered an old man at nine o'clock and then they came here and killed . . . killed our darling Anne!" Buckingham was on his knees before the count, tugging at his hand, begging, pleading.

The comte regarded the pistol in the middle of the room. He looked at Banks. He looked at Gritter and then at Feak. Finally he looked for a long while at Martel.

"Monsieur," said the comte in a sad voice, "I am afraid I shall have to take you and your son into custody. These are great villainies you seem to have done and society will be safer I am sure with you behind good iron bars."

Banks grinned broadly.

"The witnesses against you," said the comte, "are honorable men, connected with an august and worthy body. We cannot trifle with their integrity. And besides, monsieur, your story is very thin. May I ask, do you have money?"

"Money?" said Martel blankly.

"Ah, yes. Money."

"There are several thousand francs in the bottom drawer of that desk," said Martel. "I have just withdrawn my Rheims account." He gave the comte the key.

Banks grinned more broadly yet. He could understand this sort of thing. Men were always like that. Always. You could count on men and money. Always.

Faime went to the desk and withdrew the money. It was in small packets of large denominational bills. He took a swift glance at the value and found it to be about eighty thousand francs. Ten thousand francs of it he took and handed it to his *caporal*.

"You will see," said the comte, "that this unfortunate lady has an honorable burial in a decent place with a proper headstone. You will

take care of this house and its affairs and so must remain here on duty. Here are ten thousand francs. Disburse them to this cause. This is agreeable, monsieur?"

Martel nodded numbly.

"A very decent burial, you hear, *caporal*?" said the comte. "Now you, boy. Go get some good clothing for yourself and your foster-father. Two suitcases of them. I shan't want you to be uncomfortable, you know."

Buckingham managed to make himself obey and dragged himself to his feet and out of the room. They could hear him packing some things.

"Are there any keepsakes or papers you want to take with you?" said the comte to Martel.

Martel looked about him and then hid his face in his hands. Valiantly he struggled to choke down emotion and control his wits. Shakily then he gained his feet and under the watchful hunger of Feak and Gritter groped to his desk.

He opened the first drawer and put some papers in his pocket. He pulled down a small door and reached inside the cluttered cabinet to bring forth an uneven pile of notes and a string-wrapped manuscript across which was scrawled, "Negative Energy Flows: A Neglected Field with Some Notes on Potentialities in Life Creation."

He added this to his small pile and reached again into the cabinet. He stopped, raised himself and stared into the recess. His hand swept across the empty space of it

and he shot back, whirling to face Banks.

"Where is the carbon copy of my manuscript?"

Banks looked at him in innocent amazement. "Why, my dear fellow—" he paused and began to simulate wrath. "You, a murderer, are now accusing me of theft? Why—!"

"Gentlemen," interposed the comte. "Please. M. Martel, you are certain there was a carbon copy? And is the manuscript important?"

"Of course I am sure. Of course there was a carbon!"

"How important is it?" insisted the comte.

The importance of existence was fading even now from Martel. His eyes rested for an instant on the chaise lounge and its tragic burden. He fumbled at the papers and the manuscript and took himself back to the chair.

"You'd best be careful of that man," said Banks. "You'll do well to keep him until he can be hung. He has been a very wily criminal for years, playing both sides."

"Until he can be hung, monsieur? But I thought you wanted him on an international charge, for espionage or assisting the enemy or some such thing?"

As he spoke Comte Faime had moved over to the desk and taken up the papers and manuscript which he carefully retained.

There was amusement in Conover Banks' voice. "Oh, that can wait. We just want justice done." And Banks looked very wise. "Yes, we are quite content. I shall tell

them in Paris how very efficient you are in this and I shall hold myself ready to appear as witness in the trial."

"Thank you very much," said the comte. "You said you were Connover Banks, did you not, monsieur?"

"Yes. That's quite right," replied Banks, glancing at his two men to see if they saw how very smart the policeman was.

"You used to head several large corporations, did you not?"

"Yes, yes indeed," said Banks. "I still keep my hand in. Dollar a year sort of thing now. Must be patriotic and attend to duty. Can't shirk one's duty just for personal gain. One owes something to his country."

"Indeed so," said the comte pleasantly. "A big oil company in particular, wasn't it? The one which had an interest in I.G. Farbenindustrie?"

Banks looked surprised, even pained. "Why that was long before the war. Long before."

"And also a steel ball-bearing company in Sweden," said the comte.

"Why yes. Sweden is a great country. Terribly oppressed by the Nazis, naturally, but a great country. She was even paying off on her first war debts."

"War debts?"

"Oh, the first World War. That was quite a while ago. You are certainly on your toes, mungsoor."

"Why, one couldn't help knowing about so famous a person, my dear M. Banks."

Banks was flattered and would have said more but Buckingham came down with two bags which were taken from him by a gendarme.

"Come along," said the comte to Martel. "Thank you, M. Banks. France is grateful for what you have done tonight. France is grateful, monsieur, and I, as prefect of the police, am grateful, too. We can feel quite safe when we know how much efficiency still lives in the world. Good night, gentlemen."

Gritter and Feak stood back from Martel and watched him being taken away, watched him like hungry cats might watch the removal of a canary from their reach.

Other officials had come. The yard was tidied up. The *caporal* was phoning an undertaking parlor. Wheels went smoothly into motion.

Connover Banks came out of the house and stood watching the lights of the police car fade away up the boulevard. He was grinning as he took a sheaf of papers from inside his hundred and eighty dollar topcoat.

Feak beside him spelled out, "Negative Energy Flows: A Neglected Field with some Potentialities in Life Creation."

"Life creation!" sniffed Feak. "Who wants to do that?"

"Nobody," said Banks.

"Then why—?"

"Why then it must be negative energy," said Banks mockingly.

"Oh! What we ground out of Professor Reinhardt! What he said about Martel having worked it out and how it would—"

"My dear Feak. How brilliant

we are! How entirely brilliant we are. Go back and search the house you guttersnipe and let your thinking be done by your superiors!"

Feak went and Connover Banks stood there grinning in a certain self-satisfied way. He hummed and lit up a four-dollar cigar.

Before headquarters, Comte Faime ordered his car to stop. Bidding the two gendarmes be careful with their prisoners he entered the gloomy building and was absent for some time.

Buckingham sat and wept. He had forgotten tears until now. All the misery and starvation and ill-use he had received had not made him cry. But now there was something vital, precious and needed gone from his life which would never return. But as he wept he suddenly knew how Martel must feel and he looked at him and grew troubled.

Without protest or assent Charles Martel had let them put a pad on the hole in his back. Displaying neither pain nor sorrow he sat, looking straight ahead of him, examining a picture which spread only before his eyes. His jaw was tight and there were small flickers in his glance now and then which made one think of looking down into the pits of hell.

"Charles—" said Buckingham.

Martel took the boy's head against his breast and held it there, patting the shoulder quietly. There was no other movement or motion about him. He looked straight ahead, seeing things he would not have dared describe.



BANKS

The two gendarmes were patient and silent. But after a little one turned to whisper to the other. "This Charles Martel, was he not one of us?"

The other whispered back, "Of course. You have heard of him."

"There is something wrong here."

"The war," replied the other.

Martel stared before him and Buckingham gradually grew quiet.

In a little while Comte Faime came out of the building, walking

very sedately, carrying a brief case. He approached the side of the car but did not enter it.

"My children," he said to his gendarmes, "you will please enter headquarters and resume your duties. I shall drive to my home."

"The prisoner?" said one.

"There is no prisoner," said Comte Faime.

"A thousand pardons, comte, but—"

"My good friend," said the comte, "there was turf on that pistol which lay in the middle of the room. The two dead men were in improper places. The pistol would have held seven shots and seven shots were expended on those two men. From what pistol came the eighth which killed Mrs. Martel, *hein?* From whence?"

"Then," said one of the gendarmes, "those people killed the woman!"

"Ah! So we are brilliant tonight. The woman was once Anne von Steel whose father was killed by the commission. But no charge can be made against those men we met tonight. And I was afraid to leave our friend at their mercies. Now go back to duty and I shall take our friend home."

"Vive le comte!" cried the one who had first remembered about Charles Martel. "You see!" he gestured wildly at the other, "There *was* something wrong."

"Ah, I knew it also," said the other.

"Come," said the comte.

They got out and Faime slid under the wheel and quickly drove

away while the two gendarmes stood on the walk solemnly congratulating each other, shaking hands the while.

Comte Faime had nothing to say until he came before his own residence where he stopped and addressed Buckingham.

"Young man, will you please enter and tell Justine my servant to pack a traveling kit for me? Tell him to be swift and come instantly that he has the necessities. I need another suit."

Buckingham was too drained of emotion to be shocked. He went into the house.

Martel had not heard the order and paid no heed to what they were doing. He had given no slightest sign that he had heard any of Faime's explanation.

Within five minutes a small, shriveled, incredibly old, lame, withered man came limping up to the car dragging a great bag in his left hand and a small one in his right. Under one arm he packed a portable typewriter. On his head he wore an ancient, brimless hat which had three bullet holes in it. He would not have parted with that hat for the winning ticket of the lottery.

"Thank you, Justine," said the comte. "Here are a few francs as a tip. I recall you were paid yesterday. No, not in this car. My sedan in front of us."

The old man ignored the tip and went to the big black car and stowed the bags there. He waited and then as Martel was urged toward him, helped the wounded man into the back seat and wrapped him up in a lap robe.

"It is bad?" said the ancient.

Martel looked at him for a moment. "Flesh wound."

"Ah," said the ancient. "Take this sulfa. You are not allergic to sulfa?"

Martel took it and washed it down with a glass from the complete bar which was in the back of the big car.

"And now this," said the ancient. "Sodium amatol."

"No," said Martel.

"Yes," said the ancient.

"Take it," said the comte: "I am going to take care of you, Charles Martel."

For the first time Martel seemed to see the comte. His eyes gladdened for an instant. It was as though something had broken in him or worn away in the agony and fury of the past hour and a half. He never again spoke of Anne. He displayed no sorrow. A part of him was dead. The human, kindly part. And his mind he never permitted to stray over that grave.

"Le Chat Faime!" he said.

"Aye, Charles Martel," said le Chat Faime in English. "You did not think you would find me your enemy, did you?"

"My enemy!" said Martel. "Never!"

"Your friend ever," said the comte.

"I have dangerous things to do," said Martel. "And you are an important official here."

"Life is dull. I am in debt."

"The government would retaliate," said Martel.

"Of course. You whet my appetite with danger, old friend. I, Comte Faime, the greatest writer in the world today. A police prefect? Ah, it has been very funny, Charles. Very funny. Life has been very dull since we parted at Stutzenburg in the spring of forty-five. But I shall not weary you. Sleep and I will drive. Justine, here are a few more francs. A mum lip, sir."

"I am going," said the ancient.

The comte did not argue with him. There was never any use arguing with Justine.

"You were once a sailor, Justine?" asked the comte. It was a matter of form. Of course Justine had been a sailor. He had been everything. "We take a boat. I shall navigate and you shall sail."

"As you say, master."

Comte and servant put Buckingham between them in the front seat. "You have no further place to go?" said the comte.

Martel roused himself. "I must stop at Quinon Fish Wharf. You know where that is."

"Isn't that strange. I was going there myself. Tell me—" he thought about it for an instant. "That was Haus they ran over in the Street of the Scalded Cat, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Martel.

"Two murders in one night. What is behind this, Martel?"

"Jules Fabrecken."

"Ah." The comte was silent for some time. And then he mused upon it. "Jules Fabrecken, the great steel baron of Scandanavia. And Connover Banks, the oil prince with

a fist in I.G. Farbenindustrie. What is this about, Charles?"

"We shall discover it. And when we shall discover, we shall crush it."

"I heard you speak, captain."

And le Chat Faime, alias Comte Faime, alias Henri David Thoreau, alias six dozen names by the count, late prefect of police at Biarritz, soon to be late a citizen of France, looking at the weeping boy beside him, shut his jaw tight and hurled the big car into motion.

The wind screamed and bit at the windows and the tires yelled on the curves.

But it was not that which kept Charles Martel awake.

THE HIGH ATLAS, 1947

Backed by the shattered god of ancient days, face bathed with the ruddy flames of the oil lamps, eyes alight with the passion of his plea, Charles Martel faced them.

And they, sitting daunted before the blaze of his charges, looked uncertainly at him. His clear voice still rang in their ears and while he had spoken visions had danced before them. But now fear entered them again. What he proposed was madness.

Scientists ruling the world?

Madness!

What of the huge guns, vengeful planes, battleships and armies of a hundred nations? What of the power of money, press and terror? Could these be so casually burst and swept aside?

For an instant, under the spell of that voice, they had seen them-

selves for what they truly were: the commanding, ruling geniuses of all mankind—the men who thought and worked in realms of thought which could not be reached by others. But now they seemed to see the flaming guns and their eyes strayed to the file cases.

Martel and le Chat a Faime had brought them, all of them, and those files included knowledge so golden about the world and men that le Chat a Faime, pacing now back and forth before the door and listening, could not see how they, these four, could possibly fail to understand.

But they were not intelligence men, those four. They did not have gifts beyond their own fields. Little Haus, alive or dead they did not know, would have cried for an aching hour to have seen their disbelief.

"Gentlemen," said le Chat a Faime, "question Martel. He will try, I know, to show you what you do not understand. His field has been wide, his journey in life has been long. We have seen things, he and I, which you do not credit for they lie so far from your spheres of activity."

They looked at le Chat a Faime. They had not known what to make of him when first he came. Charles Martel, when they had investigated his activities, they had received with enthusiasm and all good fellowship, making him free of everything and admitting him to this their closest council. But le Chat a Faime? His dossier was theirs in the files, he had aided them as prefect of police once or a dozen times before. He was no scientist, le Chat a Faime.

"And what," said Bethel, "would you call your sphere of activity?"

"This is quite off the subject," said le Chat. "I have told you before that I am a writer. Martel has told you that I wrote ten German regiments into hell. Aye, and I'll write a world of tyrants there as well if I've a reason."

"We admit you here," said Murtowsky, shaking his huge black beard, "because you are Martel's friend. But by what right can you call us to account? Martel—"

"Martel is a scientist!" said Bethel. "And you, sir, are but a writer."

"Hah!" shot le Chat, striking a violent pose and slapping both hands down upon the bottom of the table. "Hah! BUT a writer. Ye Gods! *Po Cap de Dieu!* Oh, deliver me up to Banks and the dungeons! Sink me in brimstone and fry me in grease! What devil's talk is this? BUT a writer. Why"—and he swept their faces with a glare—"what would any of you be doing if it weren't for writers? You, Jaeckel! Have you not your debt to Poe? Relativity? Was that not Poe? Writers! Why writers pull thought from the outer dark and deliver it into your hands. Can a peasant do without a priest? Can a scientist do without writers? On what fare does your science feed but—"

"Stop it!" said Martel. "No one here is truly mad enough to suppose that an artist does not rank with a scientist or even above him. We degenerate, I think, into a wrangle."

Jaeckel looked gratefully at Martel. "Doctor," he said, "thrusting

all this aside, what you propose has a certain charm. But do we have reason to do this?"

Martel approached the filing cases which stood in green ranks. They were fabulous files. Many of them had been stolen from the abandoned offices of the German Intelligence Services. More had been recovered from where Allied troops had carelessly thrown them in the rain. Still more came from Russia, though how no man could tell. And the genius of Haus had arranged and added to them until, while those files lived, many a famous man, many a scientist, many a general and president and senator, would have slept but little if he knew of them. They contained the names, records, descriptions and addresses, amongst other things, of every major and minor scientist in the world.

He brought back to the table the master file index. It was done on India paper, one slip per scientist, and it weighed twenty-seven pounds. The ancient temple bell rang as it was dropped to the table. Martel thrust a lamp before it so that they could all see.

"Gentlemen, observe this." He indicated the section at the back. "You see here that one seventh of this file is tabbed with black. These men, scientists all," and he ruffled the thick sheafs, "have died of privation or been executed by various powers. Every slip here was a living breathing man, once, with intelligence and imagination. They are dead. And dead with them is all the good each could have done."

This many scientists," and again he ruffled the silent ranks of black tabs, row on row, "could have changed the entire state of mankind for the better. They were murdered for no other reason than that their science and some barbaric ideology did not happen to agree."

He folded a cover across the section and took the next batch marked with yellow. "This section, gentlemen, represents one twelfth of the entire file. These men are missing. They are scientists of many fields, and in those filing cases there the circumstances of their dropping from sight are set forth. Many are probably dead in bombings. Many more may have escaped and are in hiding like ourselves. But the majority of these men, gentlemen, vanished under circumstances so peculiar and so mysterious that we cannot otherwise than suppose them prisoners. Yes, many of them are of enemy color in the terms of the Allies. But gentlemen, regardless of color, creed, race or sex, they are scientists."

"Why do you make this point?" said Jaeckel. "Have we not all seen that Japanese, German, American or Russian, scientists agree. You are stressing an unnecessary point, Martel. We know full well that a scientist advanced in his own line is very likely advanced in the humanities."

"Forgive me, Jaeckel," said Martel. "I did not mean to offend."

"You did not," said Jaeckel. "I merely wanted to tell you that we are not as antagonistic as we may seem."

"Thank you," said Martel. He

returned to the master file. "The remainder of these cards as you see are divided into fields and then nationalities. There are cross-reference files there in the cases which take them by countries. There are many here, gentlemen. Many. And do you suppose for a moment that when any one of the five outlaw atom projects succeed in touching off the next war, any large number of these people will survive?"

"You are gathering here information, you say, gathering it so that it will not perish before the onslaught of bombs, so that the remaining remnants of mankind can build again. But what about these people, gentlemen? Are they not your brothers? Are they not striving for the same ends as ourselves? Who amongst them would be so slowly as to deliver into unscrupulous hands the keys to terror, agony and destruction if he thought for a moment that he could avoid it?"

"Have you thought on what anguish the United States scientists who built the atom bomb must have felt when they knew they were guilty of mass murder never before equaled in terms of time and thoroughness?"

"Dr. Carnac, amongst others, gentlemen, Dr. Carnac who engineered the design fought long within himself and was only persuaded to lend his skill to the atom bomb project originally when he and the rest were promised that a dress rehearsal would be held with enemy nations in attendance and that the bomb would never be dropped. It was dropped, gentle-

men. It was made. It was out of Carnac's hands. It did its slaughter. And have you any conception of the revulsion the American nuclear physicists felt when they knew they had been betrayed by the subsequent political tricks? Revulsion they felt, gentlemen. For can any thinking man but follow in the tracks of Nobel and Hotchkiss who each tried to end war by making it too horrible to be waged only to find unscrupulous men of little minds anxious to wage it with those very weapons? But remorse does not rebuild the cities wicked minds destroy; remorse will not cause to live again the unnumbered lives brutality cost; broken homes and shattered bodies cannot be replaced as easily as bullets and bombs can be made to fly.

"Gentlemen, if we are disinterested here, we condemn to death hundreds of millions of human beings. And we condemn to death, just as surely as though we had them here and shot them with as little ceremony as they murdered von Steel and the thousands more, these our brother scientists, working at our very problems in a hundred lands. Are we to sit idle while greed and stupidity destroy all that can make man great? Can we sit, wiped out as chalked formulas from a blackboard are erased, the best and finest brains the races of the world have yet produced? And when the universities are gone, where shall we find a way to make such brains again?"

"The dark ages roll upon us like an endless storm. The Cro-Magnon and Neanderthal, retreating before

the reaching ice, carried their knowledge in their legends and in the stone axes in their belts. Are we to shrug here and say 'No use' and let stone axes come again as the finest development of which man is capable?"

"I plead with you, I entreat you, can you see these men die? Can you see civilization fade, falter and stop? Will you be content to sit here with your refugees and books and look out upon a charred and ruined world, a world where no medicine, no tools but the crudest, no transportation, no communication, no joy or laughter live?"

"If you can contemplate the extinction of all that you have cherished, the agonies and broken bodies of the stumbling and the slain, the fallen towers of past glories and see in their place miserable ruin, if you can view the starving aged and children murdered and still remain idle and unmoved, then neither you nor I have any right to call ourselves men. Such an attitude is the lot of the brute and beast. Sitting idle, then, are we brutes and beasts?"

He was silent then and behind him the old god grinned.

There was no sound in the temple ruins but the soft padding of le Chat back and forth before the door.

Murtowsky finally spoke. "Good Dr. Martel, we have in our lives seen many wicked and atrocious things. Perhaps we did not think on them enough. Perhaps now we are dulled by the constant hammering of horrible events and scenes in the past many years. Raging demons are

loose upon the world, that we know. But, good friend, how can we do this thing? To move the mass of humanity, educate it, make it understand, is to contemplate a task for a very Atlas."

"How do you know," said le Chat suddenly, "that we have not an Atlas here?" He smiled at Martel. "But one man alone is not so many as the few of us who, snowballing into others, can constitute a very remarkable segment of the world's population. I but know my tools. You know yours. What is required here is policy, co-ordination, determination and courage. All our wits combined should make a pretty good sized dent in this little old world."

They had not thought of themselves in that way. Cloistered they had been, held away from the masses, delivering up their powers without question into the hands of unscrupulous politicians and large interests motivated by profit. They had not realized that the political and economic world was actually so dependent upon them that, if they chose, they need not surrender anything of their wealth. Listening to Martel they suddenly saw themselves as giants restrained with threads alone.

But it was Bethel who still demurred. "We cannot stoop to chicanery. You who have had a taste of evil know full well that you can force a way. Intelligence files are dangerous and violent things. I know you may in part be thinking of the power of those files for they are pretty terrible clubs. I say I know little of this, for intelligence

is a sort of science in itself which only people like you and Professor Haus can fully comprehend. But I do know this: most men of science are men of principle and ethics. They well understand the theorem that living by swords is but to die by them and that no peace was ever established by fear alone. We cannot inject force into this world which already suffers enough from force."

"What is force," roared Thorpe, bursting out after much restraint, "but the ability to make the other man accept your ideas. I say use force and be damned! Fire is fought with fire!"

Martel interposed, "We are leaping ahead into policy. How this is to be done is a problem which can be reached only if we decide to wholeheartedly do it."

"But I cannot go along with any chicanery," said Bethel. "And chicanery alone could finance us in such a huge undertaking. I see very well that you intend to use those files for blackmail to gain funds and ingress—"

"You are insulting!" said Thorpe.

"Charles Martel," said Jaeckel, "is a man of honor. I would be careful, Bethel."

"Yes, Bethel," said Murtowsky unexpectedly, "be careful."

Assailed from all quarters and even by his usual compatriot Murtowsky, Bethel let out a thin scream of protest. "I do not talk idly to insult! But it is plain we would need millions and millions of pounds, fortune upon fortune to make this

project a success. Where can we get it? Where?"

A baffled silence ensued, into which Martel smiled brutally.

"Gentlemen," said Martel quietly, "it is true that we will need millions, even billions of dollars. It is equally true that if Haus had given his opinion now he would have urged counterfeiting—for who could better counterfeit any currency than ourselves. But if, without Dr. Bethel's chicanery we can possess ourselves easily of these billions, will you then embark with me upon this crusade?"

They looked at him. Obviously he propounded an unsolvable problem.

"Will you embark, I say, upon an active and even belligerent program to turn aside and thwart the purposes of certain gentlemen of our acquaintance and the stupidities of the rest? If I procure these billions, will you?"

That was a safe one. Every man in the room nodded.

"I have your words?" said Martel.

"Of course," said Jaeckel.

Martel permitted the meeting to break up and at its end he slipped his arm through Jaeckel's and walked with him in close and quiet conversation out of the temple.

Le Chat watched them go. He had no idea of how Martel would solve that problem. But le Chat had faith. He made some cabalistic signs before the old god which were observed with horror by the Berber woman who had come in to put out the lamps at the meeting's end.

She screamed and went away

from there and le Chat, humming a tune, the chorus of which wouldn't have been allowed even in ancient Babylon, went satisfied out into the day.

For ten days le Chat a Faine wandered about the hideaway thinking wonderful and large thoughts and instructing the ready Buckingham on the mystic arts of arithmetic and writing. Buckingham, it generally turned out, knew more arithmetic than le Chat but Buckingham was eager to go soaring through all the mathematics up to theory of equations and he accepted any interest he could get. In the matter of writing, le Chat made up for any deficiency he might have had in any other field and more. Le Chat could write anything in four languages and make it so villainously convincing or extremely moving that the very stones would weep.

Most of their intercourse consisted of discussions of subjects which they both knew all too well, for they had each been raised in the identical school of rough experience. And the gifted polish which le Chat displayed in matters of human survival brought admiration from the boy at every turn. Buckingham, though he did not know it, was fast becoming a genius in his own right. The subjects of Debound, Stealth, Information and Plea received their improper attentions. And with them the strange bedfellows: Honor and Ethics.

So excellent had Buckingham become at these arts that at the end of two days he could tell the master-

mind that Martel had not gone to Arabia or the Moon but was still closely closeted with Jaeckel and that the announcement which they expected would be forthcoming that evening.

Speculating on this they wandered through the camp.

All was camouflaged or covered in the shafts and drifts of the ancient mine and so the brown, jagged slopes of the barren valley presented nothing unusual to the view. Hidden but very active on a peak a special radar set searched endlessly for planes and was so rigged that when it did not get the proper IFF signal from a colony ship it instantly went mad with sirens which would clear the camp and alert the guards. There were many other complicated and wonderful items about this camp, all hidden, all active, but Buckingham had discovered them all and, presenting his notes to le Chat, had pegged the use of nearly half of them.

They wandered now down to the field which appeared so carefully unused. The abandoned tents of the Luftwaffe swayed idly in the cool, refreshing mountain wind, the black 'crosses still visible. They were left as they were for their existence was generally known and what could better serve as hangars?

On the near side of the field a group of refugee scientists played an invented hybrid between cricket and baseball with a dash of mayhem thrown in. Their yells wafted out to be lost in the immensity of the ranges. So had been this place when Phoenicians traded, so it would

probably be in a distant age. As timeless as the hills themselves was a band of sheep under the guardianship of two ragged Berber boys who let their charges scramble up a slope where they would while they, from afar, casually viewed the progress of the game.

The Berber woman whom le Chat had frightened was leading a runaway child away from the melee and as she passed the writer she looked worried and only breathed easier when she and offspring had got beyond what she considered a dangerous range. She had told her friends at the native camp that a Franzawi had come who knew the old, forbidden signs and the blond warriors and blue-eyed girls had received it in awed silence. An ancient had given the solemn opinion that here was no mere Franzawi and since that time all the Berber guards and workmen had looked at le Chat with hypnotized eyes and spoke to him with the most alarmed respect. Le Chat took it all with great aplomb. He was a master of illusion, as all great writers are, and this in itself gave him much satisfaction. As a member of the only surviving cult of black and white magic—the cult of writers everywhere—le Chat was always pleased to drop a spell on anyone who happened within reach and probability, even the members of a half-wild Berber tribe. It kept him in practice for the drawing rooms where his targets were much more easily struck.

Buckingham did not know that this was also a part of his education.

He took it in through the pores. Next to Charles only stood le Chat in accomplishments spiritual and mundane. Had Buckingham known mythology he would have seen Charles as Thor and young le Chat as Loki. He dwelt in a world of giants and demigods, did Buckingham, and all was fresh and fascinating and verdant. It was the spring of his life and his blood pulsed as hot as the prose of his later memoirs. He had not yet begun to blunt his young body against the inertia of the world.

Being very important now, walking with enormous dignity and trying to get his tongue around the grandeur of his thoughts, Buckingham discoursed on future hopes.

"All this is very difficult, I know," said Buckingham, "but Charles will do what he says. Why, they treat him like a prince! Not that he doesn't deserve it, of course."

"Ah, yes," said le Chat. "So they do. He's come here as the first breath of hope to beaten men. You say though that he has changed. And yet when I first knew him he was like this. He spoke and men obeyed. He drew plans and men followed them. It is quite news to me, you see, that he was a scientist. I knew he was always extremely interested in all the scientific bric-a-brac we found lying around, but he was into so many things and did so much that he could well have rested on the accomplishments I saw. And here he was a scientist all the time."

"Charles can do anything," confided Buckingham with the air of

one who imparts valuable intelligence. "The French academy paid him fifty thousand francs for a course on something—I forgot just what. And if he says he can make billions of francs, why then so he shall. But why did Dr. Bethel object and insult him. You have said that he did. But who would dare insult Charles."

"Our friend Dr. Bethel," said le Chat, "is just a little frightened of shadows. Most men, Buckingham, are hypocrites."

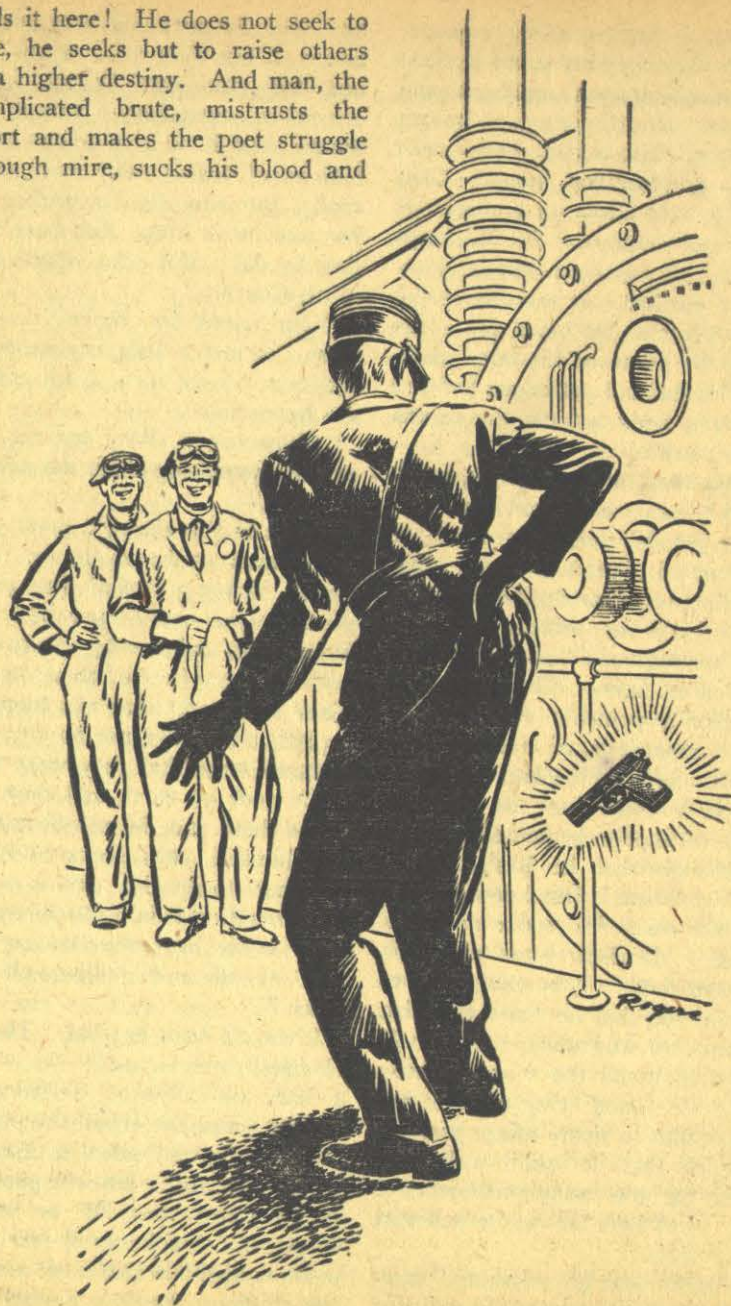
"Hypocrites? Why, le Chat, you are always talking about the nobility of man!"

"Man in the abstract, good comrade; man as he might be if he tried. Today you find men struggling deeper and deeper into self-made mires and clawing one another with the very fury of their despair. They know not what ails them except that they are not happy; they seem to sense that they were made to be gods on earth and they look about them and, in an effort to be god himself, each seeks to reduce all others to servility, and each who practices these is in his turn reduced. And so we have the amazing picture of all men pulling all men down."

"Not *all* men, le Chat. There is Charles, there is you."

"Ah, not all men. Pardon my conceit. But the artist, the philosopher, the gifted scientist does not forget that he is himself part god. He is a man, yes, but he has not forgotten. And he creates and seeks to show mankind that there are stars yet shining. He has a duty. He

feels it here! He does not seek to rule, he seeks but to raise others to a higher destiny. And man, the complicated brute, mistrusts the effort and makes the poet struggle through mire, sucks his blood and



kills him. And so I say men are hypocrites. They listen and pretend hope and faith until that moment when they find that by the lessons they have been taught and the tools they have been given they can themselves revert to domination.

"Thus, Buck, all men are hypocrites."

Buckingham pondered through all this and then, puzzled said, "But how does this make Bethel a hypocrite?"

"Oh, Bethel! Well, you see men cling to what they know. They do these things because it is easier to follow a pattern than it is to change. Bethel sees with some clarity into the problem. He realizes that man will never be free unless all men renounce the right to enslave others. This is plain to him. And he would change if he could. And then when the problem we have at hand confronts him he applies to it his old standards and so bends things all out of line. He cannot change. He must follow the pattern. He prates of honor and ethics and yet, Buck, I dare say our friend Bethel would be in a terrible spot if one demanded a good clear definition from him."

"Le Chat, I am drowning!"

"Forgive me. What I mean is this. Bethel tried to brand Charles with an attempt at chicanery. He cannot see how Charles can finance us without resorting to blackmail via the intelligence files. Finance to Bethel is using the currency of the very nations which Bethel would love to see destroyed. His whole world went upside down when he found out that all this encampment,

all the people within it, all the food and tools purchased for it, were—and are—paid with Haus, super-undetectable currency. Counterfeit money, Buck. Haus rounded up three or four of the best counterfeiters in Europe and put them to work. The stuff has been arriving here by the bale for half a year and everyone has been accepting it and spending it with innocence. English notes, American bills, Italian lire."

"Counterfeit?"

"The counterfeiters Haus procured were the very Germans who had been making invasion money for Hitler. They had all the plates. Haus had German and Italian plates as well—the originals. He had paper by the truck load and a chemist who could make more. You saw the old warehouse at Biarritz? As prefect I took good care that Haus was not raided. Why? Because he had the nucleus of the whole solution there. But now Bethel gets nice and infects the others. They did not know—and neither will the very governments—that this was counterfeit money."

"Charles would call it dishonest, wouldn't he?"

"Charles? No. Bethel, yes. Because Bethel, seeking to pull the teeth of aggressive powers yet follows the pattern within himself which dictates that he must be true and honorable. He must use only money authorized by the very governments he detests. And so I say, most men are hypocrites. They espouse a cause for good and then, if it conflicts with their life's teachings in any way, they cry shame to

it. They pretend what they are not. A revolutionary, Buck, if he be not a god, seeks only to overthrow those who oppress him so that he, in his turn, can oppress. Revolutions are not successful. They never are for men won't change their patterns. Thus Communist Russia is only a Czarist state in its bureaucratic form. Thus the French revolution only brought France a strong emperor to replace a weak one. Men don't revolt, they substitute titles and retain the old form.

"Most men, Buck, yearn for that type of government in which they can be the overlords, either personally or as a class. This is very cynical, perhaps, but yet it is true. An industrialist for instance might support a revolt to put industrialists in power but would never support one which raised up labor. 'I desire and will support,' says the revolutionary, 'the government in which I will be king.'

"All your isms, Buck, are mostly the same thing. The ideology is culled from some poet, some philosopher. The revolutionary sells the populace the catch phrases and there is a revolt and a lot of men get killed. And the new government is pretty much like the last. This is caused by two things. The inertia of the populace is such that it will persist despite all efforts in clinging to its old patterns. A few revolutionaries can be trained. But then who can train millions at a breath? And so the easiest thing to do is to give them the old government back again with a few new names. For the revolutionary may theorize at

length but when he inherits the necessity to rule then he must use those weapons with which he knows the populace has been controlled in the past."

Lost, poor Buckingham could only gaze agape and say, "But le Chat, aren't we revolutionaries?" And, "Don't we seek to change the whole world?"

Le Chat smiled. "I corrupt you, I fear."

"No. Please, le Chat. Tell me. Aren't we?"

"Certainly," said le Chat, cutting at the heads of a wheatlike grass with a small stick. "Certainly, Buck."

"But le Chat! You mean we will fail? You mean we will not improve the world?"

"World saving is not much account, Buck. Saving men is. But there, you've asked for it. Charles has been beating his brains out with this same problem. Therefore it has become plain to him that we cannot use force or wage war for this will only entrench us in the old national forms again. What we can do is leave the governments be. White of us, isn't it? Leave them as they are. Touch not one senator or dictator or king, kill no single citizen anywhere. We are embarked upon a singular madness. Only destruction will make us win quickly and yet to destroy will be to destroy what we hope for. Science was not meant to kill and maim but to seek truth and help mankind. Should we then kill and maim?"

"But le Chat! What can we do?"

"Deny," said le Chat. "We can seek to deny the governments of the world weapons other than those needed to control the populace. Armies and navies, in truth, are made for civil purposes. They are clubs over the populace. This is their first responsibility: to protect the government from its own people."

"But in the United States, they say, the government is 'by the people, for the people and of the people'. What of this? Do the army and navy in America protect the government?"

"Let us not walk on this quicksand, Buck. There are certain little tricks which are used to control. We will not go into them. In America men are free. But under any government a man is free only so long as he supports that government, believes in it, obeys it. I am cynical. You must not take what I say seriously, Buck. But some day, when we get to America, make a few small tests: preach a barbaric religion, shout 'Hooray for the Communists!', refuse to join a union and tell people all laws are enforced with fear and see how long you stay out of jail. I am cynical. Do not heed me."

"But what do you mean by 'Deny'," said the persistent Buck.

"Buck, all fancy weapons today, from the naval cannon to the atomic bomb require the continuous application of science. If all scientists simply refused to work on such destructive weapons, why then, *voilà!*, there are no more wars."

"But this isn't practical!" cried

Buck. "Scientists are citizens of these countries. They can be jailed and shot. I have seen them jailed and shot. And they will work when they are starving. They have done so!"

"Ah, you have a brain, Buck. But, hopeless as it is, this is our only chance to keeping fifty per cent of mankind from getting squashed in the next five years."

"There must be more to this!"

"Of course. Propaganda. Strong popular feelings. Refuges for escaping scientists. There is more."

"But maybe scientists are like other people," said Buck. "Maybe they have homes"—he struggled with this for a moment, having so recently found and lost the only home he knew—"and wives and children and maybe they are respected where they are. And maybe they won't want to make a supreme sacrifice. Maybe they aren't of the opinion that there will be another war. Maybe they are afraid of their own governments and won't chance it."

"Maybe—maybe—maybe. Buck, I am glad we agree that this may well be a lost cause already. But we can try. There is something melancholy and wonderful, old comrade, in dying for a lost cause, knowing well it is already lost."

"Dying won't help anybody," said Buck.

"You are a man of experience," said le Chat. "But still, it is melancholy and wonderful."

"Le Chat," said Buckingham suddenly. "Do the others know all these things?"

"If they do, young man, your uncle le Chat will have done a lot of talking to them in vain."

"But Charles knows."

"Charles? Well, maybe he does. Maybe he doesn't. He has one creed, Buck. 'Damn the man that won't try!' Oh, certainly, Buck, he knows all these things. He knows more than I do. He has a dynamo in him and he can see deeper than all of us. Don't pay attention to me. Perhaps we shall win! Perhaps the world will be saved! Perhaps."

"You are sincere," said Buckingham. "You don't think it will be!"

"Buck, to me life is the grand adventure. I laugh, I drink. I wear beautiful clothes and practice magic on the ladies and lords. I am a writer, I record what I see. I inspire, I condemn, I exalt, I crush, and all with a nimble pen. But I am not of such fine blood as Charles who, well knowing where he goes, can achieve the ecstasy of the Grail. But there, here comes the week's plane!"

They stood by the hangars and watched it come in. A big Caproni bomber, converted, appearing like a usual airliner, complete with numbers. Four Italian pilots came out of the operations tent and stood idly watching the skill of their brother's landing.

Three Berbers dashed out to the ship as it came to a stop and, under the direction of a plump little Spaniard, helped run the big plane in under cover.

The pilot and his crewman leaped down and called for a ladder and

when it was brought, beckoned to the idlers for further assistance.

Le Chat and Buckingham, fumbling in the sudden gloom of the hangar now that the curtains were in place, made their way to the side of the ship. They were quite unwilling to be last in any mystery and so were first into the cabin.

They encountered a richly dressed man who sought to pass them quickly and get out. This action to one of le Chat's training, was reason enough to block the way. Le Chat could see very well now. His handsome face went grim.

From nowhere le Chat flipped a compact Luger and spun it on his forefinger until it blurred and came suddenly, viciously on target.

"Well, M. Velkin," said le Chat in a voice which made Buck chill. "It seems I shall have the honor at long last—"

"Don't!" The man hurriedly backed and sought to cover the muzzle with his palms. "Don't!"

"Why not? Six members of the underground received no mercy from you. Why should you cry for mercy now? What devil's errand brings you here? For know now that you are recognized, that your past is clear in my mind as it must be black in yours and that you are going to die, here and now, painfully!"

At this speech Dr. Albert Franz, once Velkin, shuddered and fixed a glassy eye on Heaven via the bomber roof. "Save me! Jesus save me!"

"Le Chat a Faime!" cried someone on the floor. "Put down that

gun, you beloved fool and come here to your old friend!"

Le Chat thought he heard ghosts. Uncertainly he took a forward step and then dropped hysterically on his knees beside the basket stretcher.

"Haus!" he cried. "Haus! Oh, you sinful, wicked brute! You filthy degenerate beauty! You sweetheart! Buck! It's Haus! Somebody phone Martel! Somebody, anybody! Oh, Haus, you ugly duck, you charmer!"

"Don't!" wailed Haus. "Gott, you swiner! Can't you see I am in baskets and casts? Don't maul me! Help!"

Indeed, now that le Chat got a good look at him, Haus was in a remarkable state. The wire stretcher exactly enclosed him as an outer layer. Then there were bandages. And plaster. He looked like nothing less than a mummy fitted with a gigantic mustache and fishbowl thick glasses. He wreaked of iodoform.

"Do be careful," pleaded Velkin. "Oh please be careful of him. He is a mass of broken bones."

"You better worry about me!" said Haus. "Le Chat, this stinker has done an heroic thing. Und ve should forgive him—keeping him under guard of course. A genius the bones mit. And he has fortune and home deserted all for the love of Martel—and some persuasion from me of course. And here we are. *Ach*, how lovely it is to see your face. Still hungry?"

"Somebody take this stretcher!" said le Chat.

"Oh, do be careful!" wept Velkin.

And they bore Haus across the field and up the hill in triumph, greetings beating upon him from every side. After him came a regular safari of supplies by which Velkin intended to make the professor well beyond doubt.

A Berber, dirty and thin, looking uncommonly common, watched the procession disappear into one of the drifts which led to quarters and then, with an intelligent and wary eye, looked around him.

He hefted his rifle and shouldered the strap and then, walking casually as though he had no errand in the world beyond drumming up a few lost sheep, went down the hill.

Ahead of him, thin in the afternoon haze, stretched the far-off coastal plain.

Le Chat a Faime stopped at the laboratory entrance and looked with something like awe into the huge underground cavern. Switches gleamed sullenly, great banks of transformers stood like squat ebony giants, porcelain insulators winked, and scattered coils of wire, mounds of condensers, piles of tubes, cabinets of intricate connections jammed the place until, for all its immensity, one could scarcely walk for fear of stumbling into sudden oblivion. The whole was bathed in eerie blue light from vapor lamps and there was a devil's smell of brimstone in the air which caught and twisted the throat. But lowering down upon it all, its head utterly out of sight in the ink of the far off roof, muttering and snarling and crackling as

though brooding mad, stood the god of the place, a vibratron.

Men, goggled and aproned and gauntleted until they were better thought of as earth gnomes, were busy in the place, dwarfs before power.

Far off in the distance splashed red was another man, Martel. He stood before a bank of furnaces which roared and sighed and roared again under the onslaught of forced fuel and air, developing incredible temperatures and throwing out an angry scarlet glow which flickered and flashed upon their master and painted fantastic patterns upon the concrete floor.

Jaeckel was there in attendance, like a magician's familiar, handing, advising, warning and often recoiling.

Their activity smacked of the blackest black magic to le Chat a Faime. Here was a realm of mystery into which he could not reach. Here were rituals and cabalistic formulae which would be forever closed to him. Here and here alone he felt awe.

He had liked and respected Martel before.

Now he looked on him as some kind of exalted priest whose mysteries could never reach the brain of a common man.

The shrill whine which filtered through this bustle and roar began to eat on le Chat a Faime's nerves. He was afraid to enter and yet as he nervously glanced at his watch he saw that Martel and Jaeckel were already ten minutes late for the meeting. He disliked going back and

telling the others that he did not know when they would come.

A youth, sweating, withdrawing his gauntlets and goggles to wipe at his forehead, breathed deeply of the cool shaft air and then noticed le Chat.

"Would you take a message to Martel for me?" said le Chat.

"Bother Charles Martel?" plainly the technician was shocked. He looked as if someone had just asked him to soar to the moon unaided.

"He's late for the meeting," insisted le Chat.

The youth knew nothing about the meeting. Since he had deserted the Russian army in Vienna and thus given up a promising career as an electrical engineer this had been his home and Jaeckel had been his general. In the past ten days he had seen his general clicking his heels respectfully to Charles Martel and had himself seen that there were things here which had gone right the first time to the pressure of Martel's thumb.

"No," said the youth.

He went away from there. Le Chat a Faime fidgeted. He wished he knew where that accursed whine came from. He looked at the transformers and switches, electrodes and condensers. He shuddered.

Martel had a long pole now and Jaeckel was waltzing at a distance. They were obviously doing something which was intense and important.

To themselves Martel and Jaeckel might have appeared as practical and even normal individuals, but to themselves so might have appeared

the greatest Chaldean astronomers thinking naught upon the respect, even reverence, which they inspired in the breasts of those confronting their great mysteries.

Le Chat a Faime would no more have moved from that spot now to address or disturb these two supernatural beings than he would have thought of swimming in a lake of lava. There was something so eerie in their flame-painted bodies, something so awesome and godlike in their command of these immense powers and mechanical beasts, that they removed from themselves from any association with ordinary mortals and walked now in some far realm where no mere mortal dared touch a terrified foot.

He looked into the kingdom of the underearth and found Vulcan and Loki conniving there with magical forces and tools and very much preferred to bide his time.

He sought to whistle to declare his extreme casualness and the whistle became all wound up in jagged harmonics with the shrill whine and wound a curving rasp of sound down through the enormous chamber. Instantly he ceased as though he had been caught singing a juke box song in church. A silly grin upon his mouth he backed up until he was outside the entrance in the cold starlight.

It was a greater relief than he had calculated and the effect was to start the sweat from his brow where it stayed like a clammy hand until his handkerchief swept it away.

He was very glad to see something understandable like Haus

borne on a stretcher by two Berbers enroute to the temple for the meeting. The Berbers were not enjoying life for even though Haus had slept since his arrival his many contusions still ached and he was informing the Berbers at each jolt of divers biological monstrosities which had offensively existed in the ancestry of each. He was varying the languages he used through a gamut of the twelve he knew in case the Berbers might fail to understand completely their extreme accursedness in one or another tongue.

"Stop!" cried Haus at last. "Ach, the camels which have suffered, the beasts which have screamed, the dogs— Ah! Le Chat!"

"Hello, Haus," said le Chat, finding that his voice quivered a little as he sought to use it. He repaired that. "Martel and Jaeckel are going to be late, I guess. Working." And he jerked thumb at the cavern.

"Go in und tell them to come," said Haus. "Work, work, work. It's all a scientist thinks about. And here we hold a world—so!" he pinched thumb to forefinger, "and they play with their toys. Zö! Go in."

"Maybe they would rather not be bothered."

"Ach! Maybe I would rather not be bothered. Go in and tell them. Say that Haus is waiting here in the cold. They'll come." He looked hard at le Chat when that one hesitated and the starlight made the thick lenses glint.

Le Chat twisted around and tried to get nimble with excuses. But the

starlight on the glasses was so like the eyes of his long dead tyrant of an uncle and so unsettled was his mental condition that he finally squirmed backwards until he was within the entrance.

Beaten, le Chat turned, summoned up enough nerve to face six firing squads, and plunged.

He hoped his steps were sedate for his knees were certainly not. The dynamo was shrilling at a higher pitch. The squat ebon beasts of transformers glared upon him. The furnace mouths yawned and gulped hungrily while tubes, like wolves' eyes, regarded him balefully in the dim niches. Bric-a-brac lay about, shadowy and indeterminate, like wounded robots. And glaring upon him from its unseen heights, the god of the place, the vibratron, bade him turn and flee with a silence as thick about it as a wall.

Le Chat would have obeyed, but he had his eyes steadily on Martel now and he repeated mentally that Martel was an ordinary man and his friend and would be quite pleased to see him. After all hadn't he and Martel drunk from the same pannikin? Hadn't they shared many a damp and questionable shelter. Things like this draw men together and did any of this wipe out those shattering years of comradeship which in their very destruction cemented friendship true?

So saying he made bold to progress until he was quite near the vibratron. He glanced at it with the hackle-raising sensation that it was alive and possessed of diabolical

cadism, waiting only until an unsuspecting victim was within reach of the altar base when it would energize and, reaching an insensate arm from the blackness above, take its human prey. So strong was this sensation that before he could entirely grip the wild flight of his intuition, he had half begun an ancient and magical sign, one hand on his gun.

He instantly restrained himself. The "god" was after all a thing of Martel's building. He had heard something of that. It had been something usual, used in splitting matter or some such thing—le Chat did not entirely understand—and then Martel had shielded it and rebuilt it for purposes of his own. Well, Martel had built it and Martel was his friend. This "god" was so much porcelain, copper and bismuth. It rated no cabalistic signs.

He was passing very close to it now and, with need of a gesture of contempt, instead he gave it a patronizing slap.

The effect was instantaneous and awful.

He had felt a tugging at his pocket and now, with a jarring rip, the cloth tore and his gun flew from him like something terrified of its life!

So hard was the yank that it unbalanced him and threw him away from the vibratron on the same course, naturally, that the gun had taken. He staggered, kept upright only by letting one knee touch earth, and holding his left arm up in defense, gazed past it in horror.

The god of the place regarded

him with impassiveness as though no longer interested in him, having proved superiority and authority here beyond any mortal doubt.

In a few seconds, le Chat's heart went low enough in his throat to permit him to breathe and he glanced about hastily to see if anyone had noticed. No one had and so le Chat, like a good soldier, fumbled for his gun.

It lay upon the ground some twenty feet from the vibratron, directly below a large and intricate converter which had been operated upon and now had its metal guts dangling from it in a tangled copper stream.

Le Chat went up to the gun and fumbled to grasp it.

But the instant he touched it, it moved!

Experimentally he sought again to touch it. It inched farther away from the vibratron as though it, too, was terrified of the thing and sought to bury into the converter's abandoned guts and hide.

Le Chat tried just once more. He lifted the copper wires and reached for the weapon but instantly that it was free and before his hand could touch it it flew anew and vanished utterly in the flame-splashed gloom.

This was too much for le Chat. The courage of this very courageous man went out like a candle blown.

He whirled and raced for the exit and he didn't stop running until he was all the way outside and some ten feet beyond the stretcher where Haus lay.

Somehow he managed to halt and despite the proximity of that great

yawning hole in the mountainside beyond which guns flew away at a touch and dynamos roared, braced himself to come, sweating and watchful, back. He experienced a great desire to be gone a long way from that spot and, in truth, he ever afterwards avoided its vicinity.

"Ach! Vere iss Martel?" said Haus, thinking plainly that something must have blown up in there.

"He is all right. He'll come right along. We're to go to the meeting right now."

"What happened?" said the agitated Haus.

"Oh," said le Chat, with a forced and very shaky laugh, "I just run like that sometimes. Good for you, you know. Healthy. Yes indeed. Very healthy." And when he tried to laugh again he found that the sound threatened to go soaring from baritone right on up to mezz-soprano and hastily desisted. "Come," he begged.

And the very curious and also suspicious Haus permitted himself to be carried in the tracks of le Chat who hadn't waited around to see if his suggestion would be carried out but was now, with all decent haste, approaching the ancient temple where sat a god with a shattered face who, though he might have gobbled a few human sacrifices in his time, was yet a god a man could understand and hold in control with a few expert, mystic and beautifully executed signs.

It was a hot, sweating, much disheveled Martel who entered the meeting place that night. It was

late and the other members of the group were greatly annoyed. Nine o'clock was not midnight. But out of respect for Martel they held their peace and waited for him to take his place at the head of the board.

Presently the endless cups of coffee had given up their remains from the board and Murtowsky had put away his huge brass samovar and all squared themselves about to listen to the promised tidings.

Like most people they had their illusions about what a top-flight nuclear physicist should look like and they were vaguely troubled by Martel. He should have been wearing comfortable but somehow dignified mufti and his face should have been shaven and somewhat haloed by the brilliance of his knowledge. He wasn't and it wasn't.

Charles Martel stood there in the dirtiest, most tattered apron conceivable. Where the rubber was ripped, rusty pieces of metal thrust out, and great gleaming globules of cooled splashes mingled with the soot and dirt of the furnaces. His arms were bare and stained to the elbow, pitted with new burns; his hair was all matted and bedraggled under a much-chipped helmet; his forehead was greasy and brimy and covered with an old pair of goggles which only a spiritualist could have seen through. Hands, cheeks, boots and pants all bore the signs of wear, grime, travail and antiquity. Charles Martel neither looked nor smelled like a top-flight physicist. Bethel wrinkled up his delicate nose. He had ideas about people looking their station and certainly tried to

live up to them—that he was scrawny and unprepossessing was a thing which never entered his calculations.

The last time Martel had stood there they had heard themselves fried alive for their inactivity. And as he had had no word for them prior to this eleventh hour, they regarded him mixedly.

Murtowsky knew he had failed.

Thorpe was an agony of curiosity and hope.

Bethel knew Martel had been bluffing all along. But old Jaeckel held his peace and le Chat and Haus ran on pure faith alone.

It was Thorpe who spoke first. "I hope we are not assembled here in vain, Martel. If you've got anything like you promised, we can quit this fiddle-faddle and get in some real licks against those—"

"Let him talk!" said Haus. He was raised on two stone seats but he couldn't raise his head from the stretcher and he couldn't sit at the board. He made it up by sending veritable gamma rays out of his glasses.

"If he has anything to say," said Bethel.

"He has!" said Jaeckel. "Tell them, Charles!"

Martel had been trying to get out of his apron for the thing was heavy and stank, but he gave it up, not being able to reach the huge buckles in the back. He paused, dropped his hands and looked at them.

"Gentlemen," said Martel, "some time ago at a meeting here I promised you that I might have some

solution to our difficulties. For, if I understand things correctly, we are almost entirely without legitimate finance."

"Yes!" said Bethel.

"Aye!" growled Thorpe.

"There seems to have been some taint of criminality concerned in the methods which were formerly employed, according to some of us, here."

"Vy nodt!" cried Haus. "If we manufacture bills and nobody can tell it, vy nodt do it! *Ach*, such queasy bellies!"

"People can tell it! A bank in Rome told it and arrested an agent!" said Bethel. "And besides, it is not a moral thing to do. We can put just so many bills in circulation and then people will get curious."

"Let him talk!" howled Haus.

"As I was saying," pursued Martel with a smile, "we seem to have had some slight difficulty with money. This is not entirely uncommon amongst the scientific brethren and, I dare say, might even be found amid other classes of people. I seem to recall at one time or another that people have said this or that about needing money."

Thorpe laughed.

"Tell us quickly!" said Bethel.

"All right," said Martel. "I'll tell you quickly."

"During the past few years I have been working on a certain theory concerning the contacting and utilization of a certain hitherto unexploited source of power. In Biarritz, gentlemen, I was able to do some quiet research on the matter and had certain hopes regarding it. But

I was not able to apply the final proof for lack of adequate facilities.

"Facilities, gentlemen, are just as important as the idea. Through the brilliance of our compatriot Jaeckel we are possessed of some marvelous equipment. His genius converted a cyclotron to a needed machine, a vibratron. He even had to make porcelain to accomplish this and to draw out and wind all his own wire. He and his staff worked for days and nights without sleep until this was done.

"Then one of our Russian technicians was able to convert the furnaces and permit them to be used for these specialized processes under Jaeckel's direction.

"Further, an Englishman we have here made transformers of the proper pattern and a young Irishman and a Swiss together accomplished the construction of intricate and appallingly delicate instruments needed to measure various flows.

"When Jaeckel and his co-workers had done this—"

"On Martel's drawings and ideas!" interjected Jaeckel.

"When he had done this," said Martel, "we commenced our first tests. I had not accurately measured the potentialities contained in this new power and, I am ashamed to say, five days ago, gentlemen, the Atlas Mountains and perhaps a large chunk of North Africa almost ceased to exist with us along with it."

Murtowsky got a gloomy satisfaction out of this and smiled. But the others were rather alarmed and glanced over their shoulders as

though they could see the laboratory and the mountains bursting apart.

"We were using an atom pile for power," continued Martel, "and we did not know how violently our energy and fission disagree. Jaeckel saved the moment by getting the pile out of there and shutting off



MARTEL

the new source.

"It was not until then that it came over us that we were experimenting with something quite beyond our original intentions. We must return to those experiments shortly in order to assure safety in the continued use of this power."

"What were the results!" cried Thorpe tensely.

A single small object, about the size of a marble came out of Martel's pocket and was tossed belligerently upon the marble table. It lay there, seven pairs of eyes intent upon it, seeking its mystery.

Bethel let out his breath in a sigh. He did not know what he had looked for but this innocent little ball was so unimpressive after the tremendous build-up it had been given that he was sharply disappointed.

"That?" cried Thorpe.

"I knew it couldn't be much," said Murtowsky, idly pulling the small ball to him. No word of disagreement was given and he pulled the object near a lamp and looked closely at it. He started to put it down and then with a hasty jerk brought it close to his eyes.

"GOLD!" he shouted.

Bethel had it out of his hands in an instant and into his own mouth. He bit it. Tooth prints were left on it.

"Gold," he whispered in quiet awe. His fingers wrapped convulsively about it.

"Let me see it!" cried Thorpe and, with some difficulty, got it away from Bethel.

It was gold and Thorpe, one of

the world's foremost authorities on all things economic, looked wonderingly and then suspiciously at Martel. Thorpe had a certain respect for gold—perhaps because he knew how many wars had been fought, how many souls bartered, how many lives sacrificed to the element. Gold was a mixture of mathematics, cupidity and blood to him.

"It's gold," said Martel quietly.

"Mine it?" said Thorpe.

"Made it," said Martel.

"These mines about here," continued Martel, "once did contain gold, with silver. But far and away the most prevalent metal was lead. They took out their gold, they did something with their silver. They left their lead in vast quantities wasted in the slag as too heavy and too costly to transport out of these rugged mountains. But the gold that was here was spent by Nero or a pope a long, long time ago."

"What are you trying to tell me?" said Thorpe. "Man, the Philosopher Stone has been the dream—"

"Like a lot of casual inspectors," said Martel, "we have all made errors about philosophers' stones. People who wrote about them had certain hopes. But there is a piece of gold."

"Real gold!" said Jaeckel. And like some physics professor he hauled out of the store he had brought a graduated beaker and a balance.

Jaeckel showed them the gold, showed them its volume in the beaker, put it on the balance and showed them its weight. With a

big piece of chalk he wrote the calculation on the marble table.

"Gold," said Jaeckel, showing them the density.

From his store he took a small chromium anvil and a hammer. The hammer batted away at the chunk and then it prevailed. The metal became of an incredible thinness and a long tape of it began to inch away from the anvil like a Christmas ribbon.

"Gold!" said Jaeckel.

He pounded one piece very thin and held it up to the light. Bethel grabbed it from him and stared. It was green when translucent.

"GOLD!" said Bethel. And he ripped a piece of the thin tape off and curled it up like foil. When the tape had passed on, Bethel's eyes stayed riveted upon the little ball in his hand. He was excited and pale. But suddenly a great suspicion came over him.

"You made this, you say," said Bethel.

"Yes," said Martel.

"Out of what? Out of gold?"

"Out of lead," said Martel.

"How can this be?"

Martel paused in the act of answering and realized that he had better not fly too far with his technicalities and theories. He sought to reduce it all down and though this was quite impossible he still tried.

"Lead is almost as high on the scale as gold," said Martel. "The slight difference is the number of electrons and the size of the nucleus. All one has to do is increase . . . well, the nucleus has to need more

electrons and so all one has to do is increase its potential and then add the necessary electrons."

Bethel struggled with this, suspecting its simplicity. "How do you mean 'Increase its potential?' I am no physicist, Martel, but I still know that God made things as they are and you are influencing matter in some way which is not exactly... well, material."

"It's not material," said Martel blandly. "It's force. But it's the kind of force you get from rubbing glass. You see, we know all about amber-type energy but we don't know anything about its cousin. We call the amber type 'electricity' and we use it to run motors and light lights. It has a certain magnetism connected with it and the flow of electrons and magnetism—"

"I don't understand," said Bethel. "Nor I," said Murtowsky.

Le Chat held his peace. Of all those present he knew, down to the deepest recesses of his soul, that he understood the very smallest least. He was nervous with the talk.

"Well, there are two types of flows," said Martel. "There is electron flow and then there is another. Well, this other is the type with which we are working. Magnetism is more closely allied to it and—To be frank, it is very difficult to state this so that it can be understood. There is much more to it than this.

"I first conceived of its existence by watching a tree. The tree has leaves and I knew these were there to take chlorophyll from the sun.

But why were leaves so like air-foils? They rustled in the wind. Why? And eventually I understood that this movement released a certain energy into the tree. I tried to measure it but no known means sufficed.

"Finally I cut the 'nerves' and tried to get at their potentials, but the nerves I cut no longer transmitted. It was not until I found that there was a tiny repulsion there to iron that I had a clue. At last I recalled an old superstition. If one drives a copper spike into a tree, it will die. I tried it and it works. Obviously copper must do something to this flow. Finally I engaged with bismuth and oxygen in a meter to measure the potentiality. It was very great.

"Then I thought of human skin, for a person goes to sleep when air is not moving across some portion of his skin. And I brought my meter near my boy Buckingham and was astonished that it went mad,

"We have long sought to measure brain waves. Only a tiny portion of the energy consists of what we call electricity. It became obvious to me that I was dealing with a stronger force, closely allied to life and certainly very near the problems of magnetism and gravity. I found eventually that I had a central force, one, which was also three forces not hitherto measured.

"Consequent experimentation and calculation demonstrated that I was also playing with the thing which held the atom together and that I could impart it at will to particles of matter which were, in essence,

force of one kind sitting in a solid force of another. Transverse and lateral wave experiments permitted me to inspect this more closely and even to drain it off and use it. I could make elements apparently disappear if they were low enough on the scale and I could change the quality of the higher end.

"We have been playing with the lower, less important part of the problem with our fission which is, after all, destruction—and man is very good at that."

"I am still at sea," said Thorpe, "but I understand that you are up against *elan vital* of Bergson."

"Not exactly that," said Martel. "For it isn't just one force. It is a series of forces, three basic, one really, which embrace in ratio to their motions different qualities. It is motion."

"Of what?" said Bethel tensely.

Haus laughed at him. "Motion! *Ach*, Bethel, always on the track of God you are. You let God alone. Plenty of mystery yet there is beyond this, I bet."

"Correct," said Martel. "Plenty of mystery yet. All we have really done is tap a source which wasn't before tapped. Where it goes, what it does we do not know. We have barely enough data to use it. And use it we can. Because it comes from glass and because it is bound up with life, I've called it 'viticity' for it is not electricity any more than a cop's whistle is a steam engine."

"It is, sort of," said the very practical Bethel. He went back to handling his chunk of foil and as he

regarded it something came over him and he thrust it away. He bent a very accusing glance on Martel.

"You came here to solve our money problems, not lecture on physics," said Bethel. "There isn't enough gold in that chunk to buy a sack of wheat. It is no more than an idea!"

"Hah!" cried Haus. "More gold he wants! Gold, gold, gold, eh, Bethel?"

"We have had some difficulty with mass production," said Martel "and it is upon this that we have been working."

"Then the problem isn't solved at all," said Bethel. "You just have a part of a solution. We need gold. We need great big chunks of it. If we are to rescue our fellow scientists from the world, to build up a propaganda machine, we must have lots of it. Pounds, even thousands of pounds of it. And where are we going to get that?"

Bethel stopped and sat back. He was proud of the sticker he had advanced. He hadn't been able to understand a single word of Martel's explanation and the thought of it so outraged him that now he was going to get even with interest.

"Well," hesitated Martel, "there have been some difficulties—"

"Ah, yes," groaned Murtowsky. "Difficulties are always to be found. Always. We must have more than this, I think."

"How much more?" cried Jaeckel.

"Oh," said Murtowsky. "Enough to do what we want. A thousand pounds of it anyway to start."

"Yes, a quarter of a million dollars would start us," said Thorpe. "But if there's difficulty . . . well—" he sagged.

"I am sorry, gentlemen!" said Martel.

"Sorry!" cried Haus. "To you pigs the greatest scientific discovery of the age he announces. And he has to say he is sorry. Has gold anybody else made, *ja*? Has der energy anybody else discovered, *ja*? *NEIN!* And he apologizes. By *gott*, if I injured wasn't I would wipe mine feet on your—"

"Our interests are practical, not scientific!" said Bethel. "We need gold and lots of it! Lots of it!"

"Then," said Martel, quietly, "I had better send them away."

"Who?" said Bethel.

"The men at the door," said Martel. "With the gold."

But he didn't need to speak more. Everybody turned and gaped and the men who had been waiting there all this time as a sort of gigantic practical joke, came filing into the chamber.

Each one was struggling to push along a wheelbarrow. And in each wheelbarrow there were great gleaming ingots of gold so that the iron wheels groaned and protested.

The line came in and each wheelbarrow dumped its burden with a thud which shook the ancient building. Then the man went away in the line and passed the incoming burdens.

The pile of ingots grew. The thuds multiplied. The shining pile shuddered and thumped and ingots slid carelessly off other ingots and

the base widened and the height raised and under the flame of the oil lamps the precious yellow metal gleamed and glittered.

"That will be all," said Martel to the foreman. "You needn't go back for the second and third loads."

He was about to rub it in a little by asking Bethel how much he could buy with that.

But he didn't have the heart.

Bethel and all the rest save Jaeckel were like men stunned.

In a voice which was almost a prayer, Bethel whispered:

"Gold."

PARIS

Many hundreds of miles from there, in a Paris which was managing somehow to forget the rigors of (1) German occupation and (2) American soldiers on furlough, old General Dupre, chief of the Deuxieme Bureau, was dusting off a chair with a fine flowing bandana and giving welcome to a M. Goddard, a severely formal gentleman.

Old General Dupre bustled around, snapped some sharp orders, let me tell you, to his orderlies and flunkies and other spineless people known as clerks and army officers, and raised a rather sizable cloud of official dust. This show done he sat down, mopped a very red face with that very red bandana, puffed hard through a white walrus mustache and finally, after commenting acidly upon the awful way he was served, let the curtain fall on his own show and invited M. Goddard to raise his.

M. Goddard was rather coy about

it. The Deuxieme Bureau would seem to have been a place to invite confidence for it was, after all, the very sanctum sanctorum and inner portion thereof of the most secret and closely guarded information of the French government, being the fount of wisdom known as the Intelligence Bureau. But M. Goddard saw fit to peer under doors and chairs and behind lamps anyway.

In the face of this fearful secrecy old Dupre got himself into a complimenting state of worry and concern.

This was the first curtain of the first act of M. Goddard. The last curtain was scheduled to fall on a certain mountain of the High Atlas.

"I have information," said M. Goddard, "that the safety of the Republic is at stake!"

Most people who came there had some such tidings and most people were shunted to a clerk and forgotten about. But M. Goddard was, at once, the director of the *Banque Francais* and the very man who had suggested General Dupre for the post of Intelligence entrepreneur for the realm. M. Goddard got a certain amount of attention in that office—or in any branch of the government for that matter.

"From sources," said Goddard, "which are unimpeachable"—Jules Fabreken—"it has come violently"—Jules Fabreken—"to my attention"—Jules Fabreken—"that the safety of the republic is threatened"—especially Jules Fabreken's—"by certain zealots"—not friends of Jules Fabreken—"who are engaged in the manufacture"—to no profit

for Jules Fabreken—"of an atomic bomb"—which lacks the sanction of Fabreken—"with which they intend to blast France"—and also Jules Fabreken—"and it is of the most urgent necessity"—Jules Fabreken's—"to eradicate these fiends," before they eradicate Jules Fabreken.

Now old General Dupre was not good at reading between the lines. He was at best a faithful soldier and as such rather given to supplanting not so much the theory of the government he served—for military service under any ideology is the same fascism—but to maintain the *status quo*. Further, ever since Mimi had finally surrendered, Paris had a certain charm for him and he disliked the disturbance of another war just then, for he knew very well that he would never be advanced any place else anyway and was very lucky in his present post. Therefore he received this intelligence with something more than professional horror. He actually felt sick. For the director of the *Banque Francais* was an infinitely respectable man.

If his pencil had not been present he would have drawn the sword on the wall. "Details!" he barked.

"Several scientists of the poorer sort—liberals—are inciting the Berbers in the High Atlas to revolt. Knowing that France is nearly prostrate, these Berbers have armed themselves with German and Allied equipment discarded in the wake of war and are themselves about to revolt and turn all Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia into a shambles.

"This information came through . . . well, our own intelligence sources. I have here the exact location of this group's headquarters. The various things needed for manufacturing an atom bomb are all there and the work is going ahead.

"They intend to bomb Paris and other principal cities and then while everything is disorganized to seize control with a police force of Berbers and Moors and so fasten upon the state. Their work is well advanced and there is little time to lose."

He gave Dupre the paper.

Dupre looked at it. He went to a chart which bore all the French colonial possessions and made a mark on the spot. He came back and sat down, very businesslike.

"What numbers are assembled, actually under arms?"

"Nineteen hundred," said Goddard. "A guard of two hundred and fifty only are at the actual site. The others are scattered in the vicinity."

"What usual equipment do they have?"

"Four fighter planes of the Italian type, six Caproni bombers. No artillery. No cavalry."

"Fortifications?"

"None. But they have an air-raid warning system and it would not be advisable to scout the position prior to attack."

Old General Dupre had known M. Goddard for some little time. He had not been entirely impressed before with Goddard's military sense.

But it was remarkable how that had improved suddenly.

"The pass is guarded?"

"Yes," said Goddard. "But the superstitious Berbers do not watch at night. They eat about four in the afternoon and sometimes do not replace their pass guards."

Dupre was delighted. "Ah, you would have made a great soldier, M. Goddard. A very great soldier! And all this is perfectly reliable of course."

"Of course."

"No offense. Well, there! That's all I need." Dupre grabbed the phone off its cradle and three scared staff captains bounced into sight, standing like three automatons before their altar, the desk.

Dupre sent them in three different directions instantly. He spat and growled into the phone. Finally he had the highest he needed on the phone and rapidly advised him. He nodded and jerked at the invisible speaker and then hung up. Dupre was all business. When two colonels came into the room he lashed at them with a verbal saber:

"Proceed to Morocco. Take these notes. Make the attack with Chasseurs and a mountain battery. Bring back all white men prisoners. Destroy all equipment on the sight and disperse the Berbers. Any questions?"

The colonels were junior and senior, of course. The junior looked to the senior and the senior looked at his god.

"None," said the senior colonel.

"Dismiss!" barked the general.

Dupre was rather bewildered by the whirlwind.

"Everything will be cared for," said Dupre. When we really have to get action, we get action. The whole conduct of the affair has been placed in my hands, by-passing even Moroccan authority and the general staff here. It will all be cared for with dispatch. And not a word of it will leak out, M. Goddard."

Goddard misread this last. It was as though he had been caught reading Fabreken's letter. He flushed and stood up. "What gave you the idea that I didn't want this known?"

Dupre blinked at him. This thought had not entered his head. He had merely attempted to show that intelligence moved on very quiet feet and that he was intelligence. He thought the remark odd but the next moment he dismissed it. After all one could not harbor thoughts about the president of the *Banque Francais*. But it was uncomfortable, all the same. It was as though the *Banque Francais* owned the army—which, of course, was silly in a Republic.

Goddard, accustomed to reading men's faces and detecting there betraying emotion, found nothing but surprise and hurt pride and so turned graciously formal.

"Thank you very much, general, for showing me how efficient you are. Ah, to be an army man! Action, adventure, romance! Dashing figures, army men. While I, I have to sit amongst moldy ledgers and spend a life of drudgery, absorbed wholly in notes and stocks and discounts. A weary life, my dear

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eral. A weary, powerless and fective life."

Dupre cheered him up. He asked him that M. Goddart was expected and that banking was probably interesting, too. And that Goddart was probably not without a certain power in his own field. Dupre commiserated with him, but Dupre showed him to the door.

Going back to his desk Dupre sat down and mopped his face with the handkerchief. He actually felt sorry for the close-herded life of M. Goddart. He should have, too!

A company of Chasseurs d'Afrique, a battalion of the Legion étrangère, and a few native guides departed the following morning for destination X.

They were very hot trudging through the sand of the Moroccan desert, very uncomfortable in their contractor mis-made uniforms, cursing the lot which selected them and not another company.

Decent young men, most of them, who had joined up to keep eating, veterans of the war many of them who had found that civilian life no longer wanted them, disgusted all of them.

The senior and junior colonel consulted some maps and looked back to where horses were being led in dust

and men tramped in dust and mules of the mountain battery wallowed in dust and were quite satisfied. The junior colonel had a terrible hang-over from a night spent in Bizerte and a very bad opinion of the senior colonel's route, equipment, training and temper. But somehow the junior held his peace—odd how juniors always do in the army—and the column continued.

It was terribly hot. The sun hit them like a sledge hammer. The desert reflected the sun back and smote them as a loud echo might. Three rookies had already drunk their water and their tongues were wooden in their mouths even so.

Nobody thought to ask where they were going or why. But, after all this discomfort, when they did get there somebody was sure going to catch hell.

Orders were orders and they went.

They knew not the history of the ground where they walked, the composition of the government which sent them, the training or capabilities of their officers, the cause they embraced. They merely went. When they got there they would fire and then some of them would come back. They merely went.

TO BE CONCLUDED

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